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PIECES
OF THE
GAME



COUNTESS
DE
CHAMBRUN

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BEQUEST OF

ANNE D. THOMSON

1924

Dear Mother -

With most sincere

regard & affectionate

greetings from

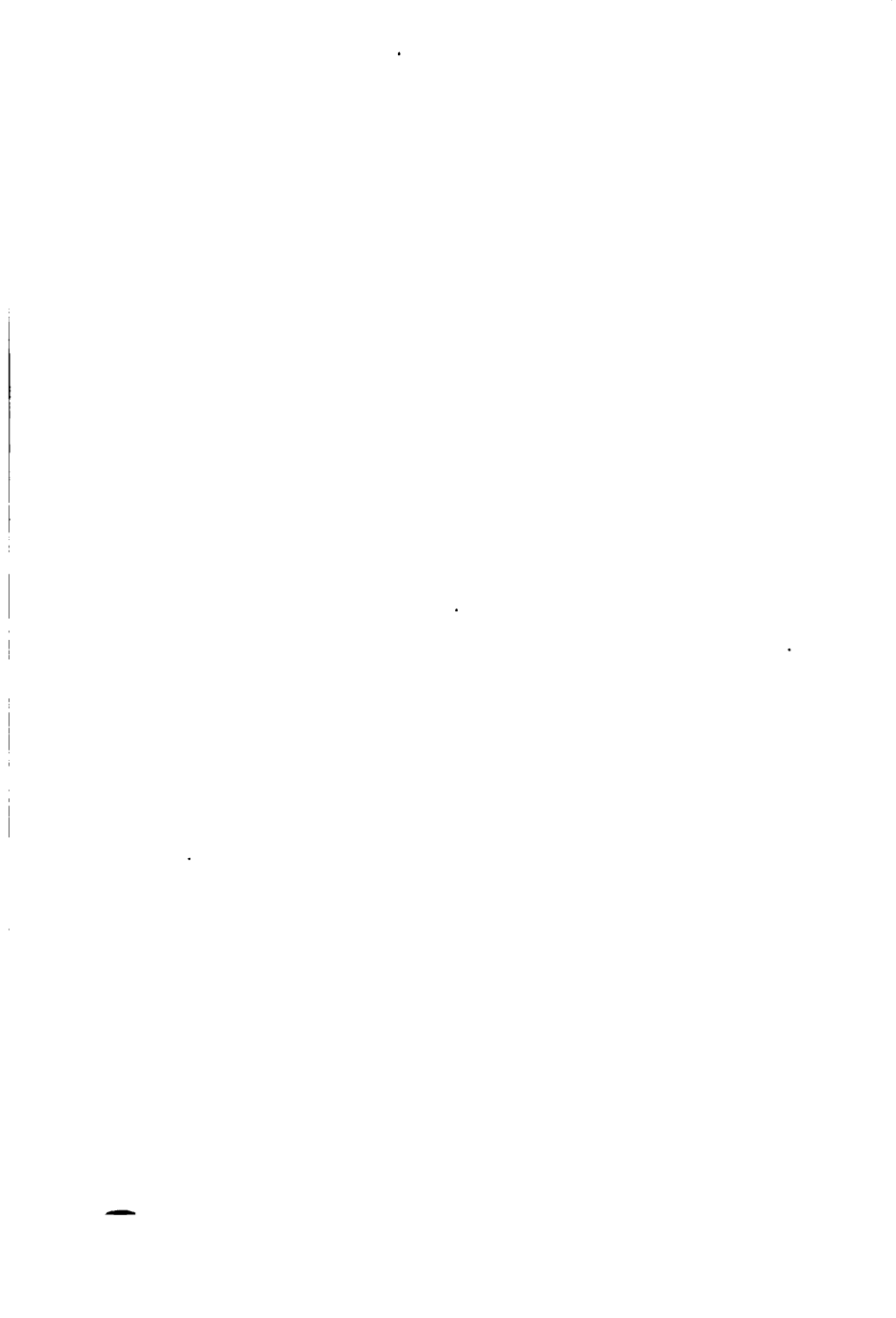
the author

Elara Longworth de Chaumont

1916 -

Chani

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BY THE COUNTESS DE CHAMBRUN

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

PIECES OF THE GAME



"SEATED IN THE PRETTY THEATRE WHOSE 'VAUDEVILLE ENTERTAINMENT' IS CURIOUSLY CHARACTERIZED AS 'POLITE.'"
(See page 103)

Drawn by U. Caputo, Paris, 1915

Pieces of the Game

A Modern Instance

By

The Countess de Chantbran

Author of "The Sorcerer of Villars," "The Sorcerer," etc.

But he — Pieces of the Game — the piece
 That has been — the board of — the game —
 Gather and then — the game — the game —
 And one by one back in the Game —

G. P. Putnam's Sons
 New York and London
 Coe Knickerbocker Press

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The Countess de Chambrun

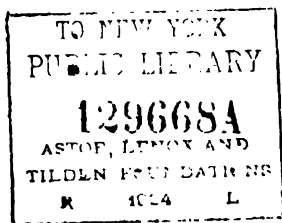
Author of "The Sonnets of William Shakespeare," etc.

“ But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checker-board of Nights and Days ;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.”

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1915

M.S.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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BY
CLARA LONGWORTH DE CHAMBRUN

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

PREFACE BY WAY OF DEDICATION

The principal characters who figure in the following pages are, like the story itself, purely fictitious.

The author has, however, taken advantage of an old and respectable literary tradition, in grouping the creations of fancy about one historic figure, and making them move among real surroundings of more or less worldly interest.

It is with feelings of grateful remembrance and affectionate regard toward all those friends who formed a past administration that this book is dedicated to

W. H. T.

STATESMAN JURIST

AND

PHILOSOPHER

as a small tribute of the author's admiration and respect.

"LE PONCELOT," ST. MIEHEL,
July 30, 1914.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

FOUR days after the manuscript of the following pages had been forwarded to the publisher, we were unexpectedly plunged into a European war, and, being at that time resident on the Eastern frontier, and consequently cut off from the possibility of communicating freely with the outside world, it became necessary to postpone the appearance of this story.

It was at one time my intention to withdraw it from publication altogether. But, upon further consideration and some persuasion, I decided to allow it to be brought out, consecrating any profit, which may accrue from such a venture, to the alleviation of a portion of that homeless misery of which we have seen so much.

This I trust may be an adequate excuse for the seeming frivolity of publishing fiction in a moment of such tragic realism.

PARIS,
January, 1915.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INDUCTION: MRS. WILMCOTE PROLOGIZES . . .	1
CHAPTER	
I.—CHRISTIAN DE TROYES	27
II.—THE DUKE'S MOVE	41
III.—PRACTICAL ECONOMICS	65
IV.—THE UNSEEN HAND	91
V.—"CŒURS DES HOMMES"	115
VI.—THE GUEST OF HONOUR	131
VII.—WHISPERING TONGUES	147
VIII.—UNOFFICIAL INTERVENTION. . . .	167
IX.—"CHASE'S POLITE VAUDEVILLE" . . .	179
X.—"ADAGIO LAMENTOSO"	203
XI.—MICHAEL EDGAR	217
XII.—"A CASTLE IN CYPRUS"	233
XIII.—"SCANDAL AT THE COSMOPOLITAN" . .	245

"These are old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i' the ale-house."

INDUCTION

MRS. WILMCOTE PROLOGIZES

Pieces of the Game

INDUCTION

IDA CLAY edged her chair closer to the Duchess, and spoke with quick mystery.

No one else heard the substance of her communication, but it certainly produced a distinct effect upon its single auditor, for the fat little dowager, *née* Jones, jumped hastily to her feet, then fell back into the comfortable depths of her bamboo rocking-chair, gasping audibly.

Ida placed a soothing hand upon the tense fingers which grasped the chair arm, then said beseechingly: "Now, please, dear Amélie, don't attach the least importance to what I have told you; I shouldn't really have said anything at all, but there is nothing like an

honest fool you know! There may not be a word of truth in the whole story—probably isn't—and it's just like my horrid habits to blurt out all I know or think, I'm so terribly frank and sincere!"

"Oh, no, my dear! you mustn't say that," exclaimed the Duchess, somewhat irrelevantly; at the same time she cast around the broad veranda such a haggard eye of appeal that a kind-faced waiter, perceiving that she wanted help of some sort, and not pausing to consider whether she needed moral comfort or physical replenishment, posted himself at her elbow to await orders. After a moment's mute questioning the Duchess gathered his polite interest and kindly intention and hastily exclaimed: "My motor, quick; tell him to come up at once!" Scarcely listening to the hurried words of explanation, which her neighbour continued to pour out so volubly,—*"Please Amélie, do forgive me; I feel quite a brute for disturbing you so, but I really thought you would want to know,"*—dear Amélie busied herself in trying to distinguish a blue body

and yellow wheels from the multicoloured line of cars drawn up (contrary to regulations) on the club-house lawn, for on this great afternoon, given over to country sports and gymkhana races, all rules were disregarded. It goes without saying that these days of gala became penitential ones to the Cerberus of club etiquette, Mr. Spencer Vance, and his associate, Mr. Baron.

The yellow wheels had hardly whirled the Duchess away in a cloud of dust when Mrs. Wilmcote stepped out from the bridge room and crossed the piazza just in time to see the Panhard sweep from sight. Her handsome face darkened with a momentary veil of temper as she bluntly accosted Ida Clay: "What on earth is the matter with Emily Jane; can you tell me? She hasn't gone away permanently without me, I hope? Indeed, I haven't the slightest vocation for walking and no desire to take my old bones back to Blanche on foot!"—

"Oh, Mrs. Wilmcote, I'm so sorry; was she to have taken you? But never mind, you

know I would be only too pleased to run you back myself if you don't mind a little open car. I'm poor, but honest, you know, and can't afford a limousine! It's really too bad of her, though; I hate to have 'gentry' so oblivious to us 'small fry.'"

Mrs. Wilmcote was a person of great natural distinction and superb carriage; although approaching sixty, her appearance might have denoted ten or fifteen years less. Very tall and habitually well dressed in the dark colours which set off her silver hair and brilliant black eyes, she was scarcely one to whom the term "small fry" could be appropriately applied. Neither did she seem particularly pleased with Miss Clay's choice of an epithet. Nevertheless, she echoed the laugh with which the trenchant pleasantry was enunciated, and accepted the invitation to be driven home with a good grace. Her alacrity in so doing was, however, somewhat diminished when she perceived that Miss Clay had no immediate intention of leaving the club-house.

Indeed, the scene about them was most charming and small blame could be attached to the lingerer in such gaily radiant surroundings.

The old-fashioned New England farmhouse, set in a dip of the hills, had been recently decked out with wide verandas. Its ancient simplicity was metamorphosed and "gilt with the touch of the millionaire," but at the "Fens" art and moderation had been applied together with the gold so freely expended, so that the primitive charm of the old building remained. The distant moorland slopes of the golf links were just tinged with the mellow tints of autumn. The eye returned from wandering over the kennels and polo field to pause a moment on the curved highroad where neat grooms were leading home the trim hunters from the sports in which they had just figured, and rested agreeably upon the gay, well-dressed groups about the tea tables.

A busy chatter of voices rose from the porches and contrasted with the concentrated stillness of half a dozen bridge tables within.

The usually small colony of the "Fens" was today augmented by a large Blancheater contingent who were in, but not quite of, the small world which revolved around the Hunt and Polo Club. An eager group of summer hotel visitors, transients, and outside barbarians were observing with hungry eyes, like the Peri who still hopes to enter Paradise, the merry groups surrounding the tennis court. They dreamed of some happy far-off day when perhaps they, too, might hobnob with Mrs. Saxon and Mrs. Bruce Herbert, when they might even bring a guest to play on the celebrated links without being subjected to rites and ceremonials of quite inquisitorial severity on the part of the Cerberus, Mr. Vance. Mrs. Wilmcote could not forbear smiling as she realized how chimerical were any such hopes, but her amusement gave place to a mood of wistful sadness as she looked about; for, unlike any other spot to which she had returned after years of absence, the restless spirit of change seemed to have left the "Fens" untouched. Instead of transformations which

had made her own Western home look unfamiliar, here she found nothing altered. It accentuated, even more strongly, the essential modifications which age had brought to her own mind and heart.

She, who had outgrown so many tastes, formed and dropped such divers habits, outlived so many emotions, now looked with astonishment on the characteristic stability of New England. It gave her a feeling of mortality facing the immutable. Here were just the same people as of old, occupied with the same things. The first American golfer still on the links; the twenty-years-since champion of polo still on the field, albeit relegated to the second team! Here also was Mrs. Dick Garnett still indulging in her well-known, but unappeased, hunger for literary lions, and, supreme type of fixity in a moving world, Mr. Danforth still sighing at the feet of the beautiful Mrs. Trenton Steele.

The "many" endure, the "one" doth change and pass, thought she, oppressed with a sense of age and disillusion, but she speedily

threw off a mood which was foreign to her optimistic nature, and, turning, joined a group which surrounded a little woman who was discoursing eloquently thereto. She spoke with so much earnestness and conviction that Mrs. Wilmcote immediately scented the "cause." This was no mistake. As the handsome Westerner took her seat the apostle of feminism was pronouncing her peroration: "Besides," she said, "of course no one attempts to deny, at least any one of mind and sense must admit, that all the logical and equitable arguments are on our side, nothing but prehistoric prejudice on the other."—

"Well," answered a bright, birdlike little lady with her head poised judicially and speaking with much weight, "you will hardly believe it, after what you have just said, but, do you know? I have been to every meeting and heard the best speakers; still I am on the fence. What would you advise me to do, Mrs. Wilmcote? You have travelled and seen so much of the world, I should like to know your opinion."

Mrs. Wilmcote, ignoring the compliment, answered somewhat bluntly: "If you ask me, I should say decidedly, climb off the fence at once!"—

"Oh, certainly, I intend to; but on which side; that's the question?"—

"The far side, of course," responded Mrs. Wilmcote, her eye twinkling; then she added simply and seriously: "Since you ask for my opinion I will give it honestly, meaning thereby no offence to any one. I have lived long in this world of ours, and for all that ever I heard said or sung, no change of method has ever radically altered existing conditions. Boys will be boys in short, and fair words butter no parsnips. I fear that I must be one of those moss-grown relics of prehistoric prejudice to which such eloquent reference was just now made, but to me the root of the whole matter, the only serious side to the question, is this: If my damaged old cheeks still can blush, it is like the famous Cardinal 'blushing to see gentlewomen lack manners.'"

There was perhaps no one present suffi-

ciently prehistoric to call this somewhat garbled rendering of Shakespeare into question; but the peacemaker scented sulphur in the air, and hastened to intervene before the champion of the "cause" had found an appropriate answer.

"Now, Mrs. Wilmcote," she argued, "you surely don't deny that we have gone immensely forward since those days, have progressed enormously, and are still progressing?"

"Progress," exclaimed Mrs. Wilmcote, "blest pudding! Have you ever seen a woman better and more intelligent or half so charming as Shakespeare's women? Progress? Why, humanity has its ebbs and flows like a great unchanging tide. Your modern reforms, here today and gone tomorrow, are just the fussy little steamboats whose passage brings a little harbour mud to the surface, and your politicians rake it nicely before they begin slinging it about! But progress! From Solomon to Zarathustra! from Shakespeare to Bernard Shaw! from Theodoric to Theodore! Do you call that progress?"

The peacemaker was quite frightened by this fiery outburst; nevertheless she continued, still sweetly reasonable, and mildly argumentative. "You speak of Shakespeare," she said, "but surely his tragedies are quite impossible, completely *démodé*; *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, for instance, we are far beyond such things! particularly in the cultured classes."

"Thus indeed spake Zarathustra," remarked Mrs. Wilmcote, smiling. "But, my dear, and very young, lady, Shakespeare is eternally human and humanity is always the same divine monster under any rules. If you succeed in giving us women the men's parts to play, it will not alter the tragi-comedy of life in any essential. It will make no more difference to life as a whole than the boy actor who played Juliet in Shakespeare's day could, by doing so, transform the drama."

The champion of the cause was getting decidedly restive and tried to interrupt several times, but the determined peacemaker, mistress of a ringing voice, here drew the attention of the group to a tactful change of subject.

"What a pity it is," said she, "to waste Mrs. Wilmcote's delicious conversation on these glittering generalities, when she could tell us so much that would be really interesting! Why did the Duchess leave just now in such a hurry? What is she doing over here, anyway? And do please tell us about Christian de Troyes; we're dying to know everything that there is to learn and you have been in Paris such a lot you can surely tell us all about him?"

"Being in Paris wouldn't help much, as it happens," answered the much-questioned victim, "since he spent all his time lately at Montreux; besides, anything that I could say would seem quite vapid and uninteresting. I know nothing to his discredit! Indeed, the only thing I have really against Christian de Troyes is his aunt! Now if you ask me about Emily Jane Jones I can speak, and to the purpose! Villainous baggage! she brought me from Blanchester in her motor and has left me here *en panne*, forgot me completely! Why is she in her own country after so many years? That she may subtly twist and turn and dodge

the new inheritance law of her native State. Likewise she wants to show her daughter Bérangère to the only millionaire left in the family, so that he also may see his duty! Won't I scratch 'dear Amélie's' eyes out when I catch her again! But, after all, what could she have been up to? What could possibly make her take one flying leap off in such a manner? It doesn't seem a bit like her 'stay put' ways!"

The tenacious damsel again intervened: "But, please, Mrs. Wilmcote, do tell us more about Mr. de Troyes; is it really an old French name?"—

"Chrétien de Troyes? Oh, dear me, yes! As old as Sir Thomas Malory, and a heap better, too!"

The tenacious damsel here left the group and disappeared into the club-house library, whence she emerged shortly, knitting her brows and looking most perplexed. The conversation had shifted to an entirely different subject, but the eager searcher for information would not be balked by this detail. "I beg

your pardon, Mrs. Wilmcote," she said, "but I didn't a bit understand just now what you told us about Christian de Troyes and Thomas Malory; they're not on the diplomatic list or Burke's *Baronetage and Knightage*. Did I perhaps hear wrong or could you possibly have been mistaken?"

"Not a bit, not a bit," said Mrs. Wilmcote cheerfully, "try an English literature!" and she looked anxiously around for her promised charioteer, Miss Clay.

Ida wriggled, blushed, and looked uncomfortable. "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Wilmcote. I did promise to run you back, didn't I? And, of course, I will take you as far as the car line! But I have just heard that I have to dine here. The wedding party from the Grays' are coming over *en masse*, and they telephoned me to join them. I'm awfully sorry I shan't have time to drive you all the way!"

Mrs. Wilmcote's response to this blow was but barely audible, but as she flounced into the club-house to seek her wraps Ida flushed angrily and exclaimed: "Nasty old woman!"

I don't see why anybody says that she is charming! I call her awfully common, and, in spite of having lived abroad so long, any one can see that she came from the West."

Pronouncing this damning evidence, Ida sought the lawn, where her little car was "parked" between two mighty limousines. With a curt "Crank my machine, please," she stepped into her place, and, being of a society for the suppression of tipping, she was equally chary of politeness and rewarded the helpful chauffeur with a very grudging "Thank you," thrown over her shoulder as she ranged the runabout beside the steps to await her passenger.

There was some slight hitch at the start, so they drove for a while in silence; then, turning a moment from her steering wheel, Ida questioned sharply, "What on earth did you mean just now about Sir Thomas Malory and Christian de Troyes?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Wilmcote, pathetically, "shall I never learn not to joke so near Boston? Such a poor, feeble

little joke, too, and so near a great literary centre. I am quite ashamed to furnish a diagram, but here it is. You may remember Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the earliest form of the Round Table stories in English? Well, it was largely translated or adapted from a French version by a certain *trouvère* or minstrel called Chrétien de Troyes. I really do repent, but I couldn't help trying to be funny when she asked me so solemnly if it were an 'old French name.' Still, as no one seems to have burst any buttons off laughing, I trust that there is no harm done."

"Oh, so you meant those old men, did you?" said Ida, contemptuously. "Of course, I had forgotten both of them, silly, sentimental bores!" She was furious with herself for seeming ignorant before this "Westerner," against whom she felt a latent hostility. Besides, she now perfectly remembered a lecture which she had once attended on Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, where the sources of Arthurian legend were duly discoursed upon by a "university extensionist,"

and had been catalogued in her practical brain together with the more modern poet as "slushy lovey-doves."

"However," she added more graciously, "I would like to hear about the descendant, if he is one."—

"Who? Christian? I don't know as to that; he spells his name differently, poor boy. He has led an awful life, and I don't like to dissect my friends' tragedies. Excuse me again, but I do hope that he may find something better over here—in my country, I would say, if I felt less alien myself on New England's rock-bound coast. How long has he been among you?"—

"All summer, ever since the Embassies came down. He's a sort of fifth-wheel attaché, I believe. We all think he is looking for a rich wife."

Mrs. Wilmcote raised her eyebrows. "I wonder what you expect him to do with that?"

Ida flared. "I see that you despise your fellow-countrywomen, Mrs. Wilmcote."

"Quite the contrary," said the older woman quietly. "I admire and love the nice ones very much, indeed, Miss Clay! I even confess to a sneaking fondness for poor Emily Jane—she's rather a lovable old fool and means no harm with her snobbery; but since you mention dislikes, I will freely confess that I abhor all the cheap newspaper talk which makes 'adventurers' of any foreigner of decent birth. This boy, like his father before him, has been my friend. He is quite incapable of the sort of bargain you spoke of. Besides, he can well afford to do as he pleases!"

Ida laughed unpleasantly. "He would better do as his aunt pleases" she said, "or else look out for squalls! The Duchess was off like a shot when I told her how attentive he has been lately to Ellie Arden. She was in an awful stew."

Mrs. Wilmcote eyed her carefully, and to the tip of her tongue came the words, "Oh, so it's you that have been making trouble? I'm not surprised," but she only remarked aloud quite sweetly, "Nonsense, Emily Jane,

your 'dear Amélie,' was once an American herself, though she's grown quite absurd now over her French family; but she isn't Christian's real aunt, only what they call *à la mode de Bretagne*, or elder first cousins. She hasn't the least authority over Christian. But here we are at the tram and thank you."

"Oh, Mrs. Wilmcote, I may really have time to take you all the way."

"Not at all; I wouldn't think of it. There will be a car along in a minute, or I may even, with cheek and circumstance, find favour with a passing chauffeur; there are so many on the road today. Hurry back to your friends, my dear! They dine early, and there will be some merry doings if it is like this morning's wedding; that is, if too many of the ushers have not already fallen by the wayside."

When Ida returned to the club-house there were still a few of the chattering group left about the tea table. She was immediately accosted by the searcher after useful information with an eager "Well, what did she say?"

"Don't talk to me about that horrid old woman," said Ida disagreeably. "She told me nothing worth a pin."

"Oh, but," said she of the "cause," anxious to exhibit her innate sense of justice, "of course I don't agree with her, but I like Mrs. Wilmcote; she's intelligent and a character; I wish she were one of 'ours.'"

"You may have all of my share," said Ida.

"Mine, too," remarked the searcher. "She's far too cryptic for me. What on earth did she mean about Marbury and Troyes? I can't make a thing of it."

"Oh, that nonsense!" said Ida scornfully. "That was only her nasty little way of getting in a dig at Christian de Troyes. She said she liked Malory—not Marbury—better than the French version of the King Arthur stories, and preferred the simple Anglo-Saxon to the wily and supersubtile Latin; that is all there was to that, if I may be permitted to interpret your oracle."

"Oh, I really am glad to know," quoth the searcher. "And how intelligent and well read

you are, Ida! I always say that you are a perfect wonder!"

But before Miss Clay could acknowledge the compliment the group's attention was attracted to some new arrivals. A runabout drawn by a fine bay horse had just been driven up to the steps, and from it descended a pretty vision in Irish lace and muslin. The roses in her simple straw hat were scarcely of a deeper tint than her cheeks became under the battery of a dozen pairs of eyes.

Shyly saluting the gossiping group she hastily crossed the veranda and took shelter in the now deserted bridge room, while her companion sat waiting for a groom to take his horse, supporting with much calmness and no visible shyness whatever the same ordeal which had embarrassed Miss Arden.

Indeed, boldness and self-confidence would have been the first traits to strike those who first beheld Christian de Troyes. Tall, slender, of rather haughty carriage and features, there was something in his deep-set hazel eyes which might be accused rather of arrogance than of

timidity. The gushing damsels of the summer colony were fond of speaking of his "grand manner and hypnotic eye"; even the less enthusiastic admired his good looks, which were undeniable, but professed to be shocked at his conversation, the flavour of which they pronounced characteristically Gallic.

"Look, my dear," said a sentimental old lady, as Christian joined the group and Ida Clay made room for him on the same seat beside her, "what a good-looking couple they make; it is too bad he is younger, for, if I am not mistaken, even the world-worn Ida will not be able to resist him long!" and her neighbour had replied, laughing: "Resist! I should hope not! Why, my dear, she doesn't in the least want to!"

Whether this half-jesting accusation were true or not there could be no doubt that Ida was charmingly cordial to the new arrival. Any little acerbity which she showed to those of her own sex melted at once into a tactful and sympathetic adaptability to the style and conversation of an attractive male. So that

when the wedding party from the Grays' drove up in relays of motors, they found Christian de Troyes and Ida seemingly quite absorbed in one another, while his former companion of the runabout, seated somewhat apart from the group, was regarding abstractedly that *livre d'or* of New England, the imposing list of the "Fen's" membership.



"Some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him: for, besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial. So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed."

CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN DE TROYES



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ALL the bridesmaids from the wedding which had just united the scions of two of Boston's oldest "Back Bay" families, together with such ushers as had not (according to Mrs. Wilmcote's phrase) fallen by the wayside, lost no time in collecting the members of the dinner party who were already at the "Fens." Thus assembled, they proceeded to the low-ceiled apartment where the feast was spread upon two long tables.

The journey was accomplished in a rather peculiar manner.

Instead of marching directly along the veranda, which path would have caused them to pass before the windows of the smoking room, the very sanctum sanctorum of Mr.

Spencer Vance, the procession followed a more circuitous route. An ancient Fens custom obliged any gathering which included women to descend from the terrace in front of the "Ladies' Bridge Parlour," traverse the lawn, and mount the steps further on, opposite the dining-room.

The ceremony over and the goal attained, it did not take long for the fun to begin. Everyone said that with Michael Edgar as toastmaster a dinner was sure to have plenty of "snap." It was true in the present case. The hilarity soon became boisterous, speeches and laughter almost incessant. Toasts were drunk every ten minutes. This form of wit was the chairman's specialty. Indeed, the said "Mike," as his friends called him, was a great hand at music, repartee, and impromptu verse. No one led a better chorus in a jolly drinking song. No one was more thoroughly acquainted with the foibles and failings of the "smart set," or hit them off with greater talent and *en train*. When dinner was about half over an upright piano was carried in from the

bridge room, and the toastmaster, forsaking the table, seated himself before the keyboard and prepared to subject all the company to a sort of crossfire of jesting attack, where each in turn became the butt of some pleasantry (albeit at times unpleasant), and were all supposed to receive criticism of a most personal nature in the same spirit of good-humoured fun in which it was offered. Everything had gone very merrily up to the moment when Miss Clay's turn came to be the passing victim of the toastmaster's caustic wit. Glass in hand and bowing low, Michael Edgar began a speech of extravagant and ironical compliment.

"Wit and beauty," he said, "could never, surely, be too long among us, although some maintained that the fair Ida was beginning to exaggerate a monopoly in restraint of trade, and ought to be satisfied with her past record as 'Belle of the Beach' during seven hard winters and one late spring. Now the wedding of that morning had come to set a splendid example to every old maid and bachelor of

the 'North Shore,' and he trusted that all would shortly follow it, and do likewise.

"For his own part," he declared, "his sentiments were known. Both hand and heart were, and had been, permanently offered to Miss Clay since lo, these many years; nor was it his fault if the fair Ida preferred celibacy."

Then striking some sounding chords on the piano, he burst into song. The air was very popular among the "vaudeville shows" that season. The refrain, which he adapted for the occasion, ended with the line:

"They are all getting married but me."

Soon the chorus was in full swing.

"Oh the Grays and the Jays
And almost Ida Clays,
They are all getting married but me."

There was a burst of laughter, as the company joined in the chorus. Miss Clay, alone perhaps, did not show quite that appreciative joy which was expected from the butts of the

evening; seeing which the toastmaster hastily turned his batteries against the next victim.

"He had been guilty of a solecism," he said; "almost a breach of international etiquette in so long neglecting to call for a toast to the 'stranger within our gates.' He now took pleasure in repairing this oversight and inviting the company to join with him in drinking the health of that rising young diplomat, whose full name he understood to be Marie Christian de Troyes."

He begged all to unite with him in singing the following verse:

"I am Christian de Troy—
I'm a very nice Boy—
My home is far over the sea.
Though my name is Marie,
I am really a he,
And they're all getting Marie-d
But Me."

The climax of the evening's gaiety had been reached. The generously flowing cham-

pagne had done all, and more than was expected of it. The noise was quite deafening, as, amid a thumping of glasses, the toastmaster shifted his tune to

“For he’s a jolly good fellow.”

Then came calls from all present for a speech in response to the ludicrous toast, and amid a sudden silence Christian de Troyes rose.

He had spoken English from boyhood, with no appreciable accent; in fact, his vocabulary was more choice and varied than that of most of his American contemporaries. A queer turn of phrase now and then, an occasional misuse or misinterpretation of slang, rather added to than detracted from what his admirers called “the charm of his conversation.”

On the present occasion he briefly thanked the toastmaster and his friends for their kind attention, and especially for their touching interest in his personal welfare. But “Monsieur Mique” had done him an injustice. He had not needed to wait for this good advice,

nor required the excellent suggestion. On the contrary, he was proud to say that they might at once salute him as "Benedick, the married man," for, although the religious service, to which all present were invited, would take place only on the Saturday following at the little Catholic church in Blanchester, the civil ceremony, in accordance with French law, had been that afternoon performed at the embassy. He therefore took pleasure in presenting his "official wife," trusting that she might receive from all the same kind welcome which they had so generously accorded to himself.

During the first few minutes of Christian's speech the company still expected a joke. As he continued the thermometer slowly fell. A gathering of merry young people, slightly warmed with wine, finds a sort of chill in the too sudden transition from mirth to seriousness. No good was done by the well-meant intervention of Miss Clay's neighbours, who, seeing that the Frenchman was really announcing his marriage, jumped to the hasty conclusion

that the young woman by whose side they had found him on arrival was naturally the other party to the civil contract. They seized Miss Clay's hands and showered congratulations upon her, while Ida, at first dark-red with excitement, grew slowly pale with anger, although she spoke no word. Meanwhile Christian, completely oblivious of this little comedy and sublimely unconscious of the fact that any one could possibly suspect him of aspiring to any hand but one, stepped over to the other table, where the fair vision of the runabout was sitting, and, with a gesture as graceful as it was utterly inappropriate to his New England surroundings, gallantly lifted the hand of Oriel Arden to his lips.

Ida Clay drove home that evening still tingling with an indignant sense of defeat and humiliation. Every nerve was tense with revolt. She bitterly resented the speech of the jolly toastmaster, whose mistaken sense of fun had been the prime cause of what had happened. Even more, she detested the beautiful Virginian, newly arrived for a few

weeks' visit on the shore, and who was quite unsuspected of being the object of such an intense sentiment as could lead to the *dénouement* called in French *le coup de foudre*.

But more than either of these, she hated Christian de Troyes with a fierce and vindictive venom which was startling, even to her who felt it. As by a strong effort of will, she unclenched her fingers from their tense rigidity; her active mind was busy in the selection and rejection of a fabric out of which she would perhaps one day construct something not altogether to the advantage of her enemies.

The newly made bride was scarcely more tranquil or happy. "Oh, Christian, how could you!" she exclaimed, as he helped her into the runabout. And he had responded ruefully, like a scolded child: "I'm sure I can't imagine now what made me do it. I never meant to, but it seemed such a simple way at the time, and so easy to let them know without any fuss and feathers, and ask them to our real wedding—I had to do that, you know! Everyone here has been so kind." She had

answered with exceeding bitterness: "Kind! To you, perhaps. Never to me!"

"That is perfect nonsense, darling," remonstrated Christian. "It all comes from the horrid position you have been in; you see slights everywhere, and when they are least meant. We call it in French being too 'sensible,' but it's not that I mean in English—what is it? Oh, yes, sensitive! You must not be so sensitive."

"Yes," she answered, trying to smile. "I suppose that I must make myself over again, but it is rather a hard beginning."

Christian, who was superstitious, ejaculated: "Don't say that; unsay it quickly. We mustn't have a *mauvais augure* on our wedding day, and do forgive me, dear, it is the first and last time that I will have been such a fool."

The words, however, were spoken, and perhaps recorded by that moving finger whose writings, we are told, neither piety nor wit may avail to cancel; and, as Christian left his companion under the ample portals of her hostess's mansion, she felt, even while exchanging the

pleasant platitudes which have seen so much service between lovers, a terrible sinking of the spirit. As he kissed her good-by she seemed further removed from any real comprehension of his heart and brain than she had ever imagined possible since first they met and mutually fell in love. As she mounted the stairs to the sumptuous "guest rooms" of Mrs. Porter-North, she had the sensation of being, more than ever before, an alien and out-cast from the world she seemed about to enter. She threw herself down beside the heavy brass bed, covered with rose satin and filet lace (so different from the nun-like simplicity of her usual surroundings), while hot and bitter tears burned her cheeks and made her throat ache and throb, as in those first terrible days after her father's death, when she had been thrown, at nineteen, into the hard ways of unaided self-support.

Neither doubts, regrets, nor self-questionings disturbed Christian as he drove back to Blanchester, where he had a little lodging near the summer embassy. Impulsive and wilful,

he felt all the pride of a difficult accomplishment, the conqueror's joy in having gained the fairest prize.

Before passing the railway he stopped at the telegraph office on Harbour Street, whence he sent a cable to his uncle and former guardian, briefly announcing and dutifully asking a blessing on his marriage.

"Sir, you shall understand what
hath befall'n,
Which, as I think, you know not. Here
is a letter . . .
And here another."

CHAPTER II

THE DUKE'S MOVE



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THE European mail of the following week carried away from Blanchester two letters which were, in due course, delivered. "Prince," the butler, brought them up on the tray, with the morning chocolate of Antoine, Duc de Troyes. The first was from his sister-in-law, and ran as follows:

"BLANCHESTER, September 18, 1912.

"DEAR TONY: You will be surprised that I write in English, but as you are always reading our most difficult literature I can't flatter myself that you won't perfectly understand and (probably even) correct my mistakes after that critical and teasing way of yours. When, however, you have gathered the extreme unpleasantness of the news I am bring-

ing you I doubt whether even you will care to joke at my expense. I will, therefore, try to give you a full account of our nephew's abominable conduct. I shall do so clearly and impartially, without comments, exaggeration, or the use of any expressions which I might perhaps regret later. In English, too, I can better quote just what everybody says, and that, of course, is the best language of fact. I should never have been able to face it all without moral support of some kind, and luckily for me, good old Susan Wilmcote has been here, and were it not for her incorrigible optimism might have been a comfort. But the romantic old goose actually says that Christian's marriage is his own business, and quite all right, even from our point of view, so that all she does for me is to keep my mind a little off the horrid facts by the clever wagging of her sharp old tongue. Then, too, she is really devoted to the family [the Duchess was not referring to the Joneses of California], and it is a relief to talk with someone who knows who one really is and appreciates the

difference between our family and most of the others, which these nasty American journalists speak of so ignorantly, and with a vulgarity which proves (as they might themselves say) that 'all coons are alike to them.'

"Now my tower of strength, in all this awful affair, has been dear Ida Clay, who has really sustained me, and when I think that if those stupid lawyers had not detained me so long in the West I might have been here in time to make Christian see reason and propriety, and even, perhaps, could have chosen his bride for him (which I fully intended to do when I consented to come on to Blanchester), it makes me rage! Indeed, Ida would have made him an ideal wife—such grace and tact, *savoir vivre* and refinement, that one could have been proud of her! Then she is a bit older than Christian, and could have led him; she is charmingly responsive to all one's little crotchets, and doesn't flatter a bit, in spite of what Susan Wilmcote says. Indeed, she's a real artist in 'nuances,' and could receive the Faubourg and the Government without

either knowing that the other was in the house.

“However, there is no use talking about that now, as things have turned out. But it is really too terrible. There seems to be no sort of justice in having poor Christian tied for life to a sort of upper housemaid, and it is quite impossible that he shouldn’t soon begin to chafe against such a servitude. Now, dear Ida has made me see a little light of hope, even in this tragic situation, and has pointed out to me that there may be a way of escape for him after all (could we only make him take it). And this way I should never have dreamed of alone, namely: a legal or religious flaw in this hasty marriage, which, as I think I said, Christian himself will be the first to regret.

“This point is for us to study, so that we may step in forearmed at the crisis. I intend to talk it over this evening with the Attorney-General, whom I am to meet at dinner, in a veiled way, of course, and just as I spoke to dear Ida, for I wouldn’t have you suppose that I ever take any one into my confidence, or

discuss family affairs—I write to you, in the meantime, to say that the most important thing now is to keep Christian over here and on short commons. This will bring him to a sense of the realities of life sooner than anything else. Besides it would be most unwise to let this girl, who is a cheap adventuress, *prendre pied* in France. In the romantic surroundings of Aube-le-Châtel, where none of the neighbours have sense enough to know the difference between what is and what is not, the poor boy might never wake up from his present infatuation until it was too late—you know what I mean. Now over here the difficulties of housekeeping on a small income and the little *tracasseries* of social life are a great strain on a romantic temper and quickly bring out real values. In any case, it is well worth trying, and, as I said, since talking to Miss Clay, who knows Washington and may be there herself this winter, I begin to see a little ray of hope, where all was darkness before. Not, of course, that the dear girl said anything positively against Christian's incu-

bus—she is far too sweet for speaking ill of any one;—on the contrary, she told me how very sorry she felt for this young woman, whom she almost liked, and certainly hated to see in such a painful position. This I thought very charitable of Ida. But she did, quite unconsciously, open my eyes to the possibilities of escape which I have mentioned, and comforted me as to the future. I shall, I suppose, be obliged to receive Christian's bondwoman, but you may count upon me to be frigid. All this has made my head ache so, to formulate, that I can scarcely continue; but I must just say that I got through the settlement of the California estate pretty well, and would have been at home now if I hadn't wanted to play the affectionate aunt to Christian, by coming to Blanchester, where I shall now stay for a few weeks before going to Newport and Hot Springs, which, they say, is more reducing than Aix. Thence, I shall go to New York and take the first good steamer home. Your affectionate sister,

“AMÉLIE.”

The late Duke had not long survived to enjoy the privileges entailed by his American alliance. His marriage had been blessed with but one daughter, an admirable product, being as devoid of personality or any individual tastes as the best French mother could desire.

The present Duke, although an inveterate bachelor, had an immense cult for the family and a sense of great responsibility in forming the character of his successor. He had long regarded Christian, issue of a younger branch, as his heir, not only to those material perquisites which the possessor of such substantial revenues enjoyed, but to three legacies deemed by him of far higher import—his title, his traditions, and the beautiful old forest-girt château, classed with its treasures of painting and tapestry as a *monument historique*.

Christian had always been a great favourite with his uncle—his childish pranks and pretty, boyish face considerably enlivened the solitudes of Aube-le-Châtel through many a vacation; nor was he less popular with its humbler occupants.

In fact, and curiously enough, while knitting his brows over this letter the Duke's most immediate preoccupation was what explanation of his nephew's marriage he could offer to Principe, the old *maître-d'hôtel*, who, ever since Christian's brief cable announcing his marriage, had watched every mail arriving from *l'étranger* with the solicitous eye of an anxious hawk. His master well knew that, with the removal of the breakfast tray, he would be obliged to find some sort of answer to Principe's eager question, "Pardon, M. le Duc, mais les nouvelles de M. Christian, sont elles bonnes?"

Nor could he find in the confused Jeremiad of his sister-in-law a satisfactory reply to the affectionate query. Impatiently wondering what the epistle would have been if written in the Duchess's usual French, he turned to the other letter.

"BLANCHESTER, September, 1912.

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND: I fear that Christian's cable will have upset you, and doubtless, to us old fogies, hasty marriages do generally

seem a mistake. Certainly your sister Amélie is not inclined to think otherwise, and is making an awful row, instead of quietly accepting what is now the inevitable. She has probably fulminated already and has, perhaps, described with pride her manner of receiving the new niece. At any rate, though I was present (by the mercy of God) to prevent Christian's slapping his aunt's face, which I could see he was longing to do, I won't attempt to describe this meeting. I hasten to write at once to say that all is really emphatically right with Christian. Of course, I admit that, in general, such a complete *coup de foudre* is ill advised. But in the particular case of your 'Brittany nephew' (being as we know him), I am by no means sure that he has not done the wisest and best thing in following his heart quickly, and without waiting to hear all the prattles and prabbles of Tom, Dick, and Harry.

"The girl is exquisite, a Miranda. It makes me feel young again, as well as romantic, to see her, but I shouldn't have said Miranda,

for a comparison with Perdita and Prince Florizel would come much nearer to your young couple, even while sheep-shearing Perdita had the manners of a Princess, and Oriel 'has a way with her' which lends grace and distinction to all she does. When I first saw her cross the lawn and come toward me I was struck by a marked resemblance to Mary Anderson in that lovely impersonation. Do you remember, we saw this beautiful actress in London, and it remains one of my most charming æsthetic memories. I am sure you recall how she flung aside her straw hat and danced at the shepherd's feast? The world might indeed grow young again could we often see such pictures!

"Well, this leads me naturally to speak of the figurative 'Sheep-shearing' that this girl has done. I fear that you have heard exaggerated accounts of it, and think no better of your young 'heiress apparent,' than other parents and guardians did of their Prince's choice! But, if so, you are mistaken, like them. Now here is the truth, and I have

taken some pains in bringing it to you, for, although Mme. Christian's face and manners would quite suffice for me, I am enough of an old worldling to know that explanations are necessary, and that if the 'long-necked geese of the world, that are ever hissing dispraise,' set themselves to it, no armour is strong enough to protect their victim. Besides, of all the centres, and very apotheosis of pribble and prabble, give me the *ville d'eau*. You know what it can be in France. Multiply by five and you will have the American summer resort. Multiply again, and you have the same resort when it has also become a colony of diplomatic embassies. I hesitate to think what will be said here of Mme. Christian's past, so I hasten to give you the real account.

"Her family is 'Old Virginia,' of the best, her mother a Rolfe, the old place—whose name I forget—somewhere near Lexington. Her forbears, all gentlemen and scholars, as well as boy soldiers during the war (in Lee's army, of course). I would be afraid to exaggerate if I said how many of her great-uncles had been

killed in Stonewall's cavalry. Since the war her family have been, of course, poor as Job. When Oriel was fourteen she had had no schooling, but she obtained from her father such an education as few girls get nowadays with all their academies. 'The classics,' as you say in France, and an expression I like even better; what dear Sir Walter called 'Humanities and Polite Letters.' In fact, from what I hear, she and her father literally lived on books. The sale of their fine library of first editions produced the wherewithal to obtain a modern education for Oriel. By 'modern' I mean, of course, practical and didactic. She learned stenography and type-writing and obtained very early a situation in Pittsburg, where she was able to follow the courses of some school which teaches everything our mothers used to teach us. 'Practical economics,' I think they call it (instead of common sense), and management of large households on a 'scientific basis.' Since the four years that she has been an orphan, with her diploma as best graduate

from this institute, she at once obtained a place (on Long Island, I think) to manage one of their mammoth country clubs, where people seem to live nowadays. This takes real ability and *esprit d'ordre*, but it must have been a sort of hell for such a girl as she, and you may imagine that she gets as far away from it during her short vacation as possible.

"This year, as luck would have it, she came here to visit an old friend, Mrs. Porter-North, who has taken a house in Blancheater. She is a Chicago Plutocratess, and a very nice one, too. The marriage was from her roof, for she dearly loves Oriel, a friend of her dead daughter, who went to the same institute. Indeed, this good lady has taken Oriel as far under her maternal wing as the girl's pride will permit. Now Mrs. Porter-North is but newly come to this shore, so that all her 'niceness' entails no social recognition. It takes twenty years here to know a Vance, even more to hobnob with a Talbot, and then you must have had a grandfather in Harvard, if not a popular son there now. You will scarcely comprehend

these fine shades, but they exist; indeed, the Faubourg itself has nothing like unto it! Had it not been for that personification of delicate kindness and courtesy, who is our First Magistrate, there would have been no one at the wedding. However, even Bostonians take a mild interest in the President, so they came in force to see him.

“The marriage was hurried, because Christian didn’t want his wife to continue a moment longer than necessary associated with that club, and, as her holiday was about to end, she went back between the civil and religious ceremony to terminate her contract and hand over the keys to the authorities. That is the whole story, but no simple mind could conceive the embroidery to which it has been subjected. Sometimes I feel that it is not mere ordinary gossip (which, the Lord knows, is bad enough), but some subtle, baleful individual influence at work for harm. Do you believe in the devil? But of course you must, excellent Papist that you are! Now I personally never have; but in my old age I am beginning

to, and, although we are assured by one who had plenty of experience with him that 'the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman,' I am beginning to suspect that he is a lady! Forgive me for rambling on in this way, and, if I might presume to counsel, get your *jeune ménage* away from all this. Christian's diplomacy is, of course, unofficial, and therefore a farce. With all his cleverness he could be nothing here but a fifth wheel to the coach. Washington, which is undoubtedly the most charming spot on earth for people of my age, who like to talk and take what we hope is an intelligent interest in affairs of state, is not a place for a newly married couple, who have lots to learn about each other in order to 'find themselves.' Christian should take his wife home and have a few quiet months with you at Aube. Then, couldn't you run him for something in your department? This would be the very best thing for all concerned, in the opinion of your old friend, Susan Wilmcote, who doesn't often express one, rest assured, on questions which are not her business!"

The fickle goddess of chance, or perhaps her fatal sister of destiny, both of whom we moderns regard with equal incredulity and scorn, played one of their ancient jade's tricks that morning upon the principal personages of our story.

The Duc de Troyes, it is true, had always prided himself on being a thoroughly clear-sighted and unprejudiced follower of reason, ever acting upon the impulse of his own free will, held in check only by a strong sense of duty. He approved in theory, or at least extolled love marriages. He refused to be influenced in his opinions by the judgment of the world in general, and his sister-in-law in particular.

Yet, in spite of this boasted strength of mind, he was quite human, like the rest of us, and equally the perpetual victim of a first impression.

This first impression had been irrevocably made.

The moment he finished reading the Duchess's rambling letter his anger against Christian

overflowed. His feelings, too, were bitterly hurt by his nephew's conduct, and though he scorned the expression of petty spite contained in this masterpiece of epistolary composition, in substance he shared the sentiments therein set forth. She had succeeded in making him adopt her point of view.

So irrevocably, indeed, was this impression made that the perusal of Mrs. Wilmcote's more charitable and veracious version of the same facts, which, had her letter come first to hand, would have caused him to think quite differently of Christian's bride, only pacified the Duke sufficiently to render it possible for him to face old Principe with equanimity. Armed with Mrs. Wilmcote's information he briefly explained to the faithful domestic that his nephew's choice left nothing for the family to desire. Beautiful, young, brilliant, and of incontestably good breeding—"La vieille noblesse Américaine, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi." They might feel, as a family, gratified by Christian's marriage.

After this conversation the Duke took up

his pen to write to his graceless relative, and it was with a decidedly "Thank-God-I-have-done-my-duty" air that he proceeded to express in cold and measured terms the extent of his displeasure. He congratulated his nephew with stately and terrible politeness on his hasty marriage, the news of which he confessed would have been more agreeable had Christian thought fit to make him earlier his confidant. As things were, he addressed his very ceremonious compliments to the youthful bride, "hoping in a not distant future to welcome her to Aube-le-Châtel. In the meantime, doubtless she would prefer to pass the winter in Washington, and, since he was informed that life in America was expensive, he would expect his nephew to draw on him when he so desired for renewal of credit."

The two men had always been on terms of the most familiar and affectionate intimacy, so that this letter fell upon Christian as a severe blow to his pride, as well as a profound wound to his feelings.

He had counted here on sympathy and com-

prehension. Surely, his uncle might have had a little more confidence in his doing everything "for the best," might have believed that Christian would never willingly do anything to hurt his beloved uncle.

Was it his fault that time pressed, or that America was far?

The Duke had been toward him, up to this time, a sort of fairy godfather who always stepped in to shield his nephew from the usual consequences of childish misdemeanours. Later he was the only person to understand the violent, impulsive, but affectionate nature of the young collegian whose troubles he had smoothed during school days just as he intervened later to diminish the difficulties which often beset a young man's military service in France.

Nor was this all. He had helped his nephew through certain tragic events, which happened a few years previous to his arrival in America, and which had for a time bid fair to leave a lasting blot either on the brain or heart of a particularly sensitive young man. With

quick intuition into his nephew's state of mind, he had at once endeavoured to procure for Christian the radical change of scene and habits which he felt to be necessary.

The Duke was a powerful factor in the politics of his department and had little difficulty in obtaining from the Government one of those unofficial posts so readily accorded (with a paternal view of getting the sons of the Republic out of trouble) to influential parents and guardians.

His action was wise. Though Christian left the spot, which circumstances had rendered most hateful to him, a prey to a black melancholy and a tragic foreboding of evil, this mood did not long survive his arrival in Washington. The wholesome atmosphere of pleasant work, in cultivated surroundings; the cordial welcome which society at the capital so readily accords to a young man "of parts," showering upon him invitations and "no questions asked"; above all, the physical elasticity of youth, which refuses long to carry a sick mind in a healthy body, soon combined

to work a transformation in Christian's outlook upon life. When, after his first winter season, the Chargé d'Affaires removed the embassy to summer quarters in Blancheater, the young attaché, far from being the *beau ténébreux* with gloomy past and clouded future who had left France, seemed as gay and healthy-minded as his best friends might wish. And when September came and brought Oriel Arden to the North Shore the determination which he had once formed to remain for ever unmarried melted, as such projects often do, before the bright flame of a real, violent, and mutual passion.

" A maiden never bold;
Of spirit so still and quiet
that her motion
Blush'd at herself; and she—
in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit,
everything—
To fall in love with what she
fear'd to look on! "

CHAPTER III

PRACTICAL ECONOMICS



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CHRISTIAN did not write to his uncle for a renewal of credit. Although he realized that the day must necessarily come when he would be obliged thus to humble his pride, he could not yet, under the circumstances, bring himself to the point of asking for money. A careful review of his financial situation demonstrated that he still had several thousand dollars in bank, and with great economy might make it last over until the summer. He wrote to a friend, directing a great review, and arranged to make regular contributions. As he composed with extreme facility, he was quite pleased with this idea of becoming "self-supporting." It was not until he observed the figures on such checks as began to come in that

he perceived how ironical was this term. He had looked forward, before marriage, to "laying the spoils of Indies" at his wife's feet and found the contrast of their petty worries and domestic shifts rather a come-down from such golden dreams. After surveying all the possibilities of Washington, from the Highlands to Stoneleigh Court, the young couple rented a tiny furnished house in an unfashionable quarter, as being after all the most economical way of living. The appointments of this dwelling were of a style which Christian called "de l'Époque Général Grant," and were a constant offence against his rather fastidious taste for æsthetic surroundings. Oriel made one very precious contribution to the little establishment in the person of an old Virginia negro, who had been formerly in her father's service. Jefferson was a treasure; his ample manners and flowing conversation were a source of unfailing entertainment, but, still more important, he was an untiring and competent worker. With the occasional aid of a fleeting and ubiquitous "chore woman"

he did all that their little establishment required. Both, after a custom still very common in Washington, returned to their own homes to sleep, when their duties were finished.

Oriel had found old Jefferson quite by accident. One day she thought, while in the market, that she perceived a familiar figure, ragged, bowed, but still with something that reminded her of her father's "body servant." It did not take long to hear the pathetic story of the old man, who had come to Washington in the vain hope of finding work. He had remained long without it, and had consequently arrived at a period when food was equally scarce. Oriel returned home flushed, excited, and with tears in her eyes. She approached the subject quite hesitatingly at first. She didn't at all know what her husband might think of her sudden resolution. "I hope you won't mind something I have done," she began apologetically. "I am afraid that he won't do, and I know that we can't afford charities, but I couldn't leave him

on the street. I am sure he will at least try hard, and I have told him that you are awfully particular." If Oriel had had any doubts as to her husband's reception of the news that "Old Jeff" had been engaged as their sole attendant, these doubts were soon dissipated. Christian, always very kindly, had greeted the old negro in a manner which touched his wife deeply, and with intuitive tact he made an immediate conquest of the old man, gaining at once the zealous heart-service which no wages can procure. Under these genial influences the poor negro blossomed out and became magnificently pompous. As Christian was fond of saying, "twelve powdered footmen could not have cast such a dignified halo on their establishment as the white hair of the venerable Virginia darky who had served 'mong de fust families.'"

Christian once observed, in describing what he called the "sumptuous" manners of his domestic, "I have only seen three persons of really regal deportment—my uncle, Mrs. Pendragon, and old Jefferson; certainly, the

last has the greatest distinction." And Oriel answered: "Oh, Christian, you don't know how much more it makes me love you that you like old Jeff."

In the days of his prosperity Christian had joined the principal clubs and, of course, was obliged to abide by this extravagance. But, owing to the very economical basis of their small household and the complete mastery of all technical details of domestic economy which Oriel's profession had given her, he was surprised to find, after the first two or three months, that the much-discussed "high cost of living" was, in their case, much exaggerated. No entertaining was expected on the part of a young couple so situated, and the hospitable doors of Washington's élite were thrown wide open to receive such an attractive *jeune ménage*.

Mrs. Porter-North had taken great delight in bestowing upon her young friend some "model gowns" of quite barbaric splendour. It was a constant joy to Christian that his wife should be dressed at least in a manner befitting her station.

Both were fond of simplicity, both were young and much in love, so that lack of material luxuries touched them very little. As to those principal difficulties of the newly married, the inevitable process of adjustment to varying points of view, the constant surrender of a portion of one's personality, youth and mutual attachment did much to smooth the rather stony path of early matrimony. Christian was not, as the phrase goes, "difficult to live with." He was essentially amiable, and gifted with that sense of proportion fostered in the most practical country of the world which understands so well how to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials in life. Oriel appreciated her husband's qualities and enjoyed his sense of humour without quite understanding it. For in this latter trait she did not share.

In fact, she took herself with intense seriousness. Brought up on the romantic reading of two previous generations she remembered the time when *Clarissa Harlowe* had contained for her a higher revelation. Often a light

word from her husband on subjects which she considered "sacred" shocked her susceptibilities, and occasionally brought tears to her eyes.

Religion had never played a dominating rôle in the young girl's life. Born and baptized in the Catholic faith of her mother, who died when Oriel was still quite a child, she had not continued in the practice of religion. Her father possessed an easy-going approbation toward all forms of Christian doctrine or moral philosophy with a personal leaning toward mystic Eastern modes of thought. He refused to be bound by a definite creed or formal rules. "Such things," he used to say, "are excellent for persons completely devoid either of character or imagination. A person of character will lead a fairly decent life unhampered by any set of conventional doctrines, and a person of imagination can find in any form of religion or philosophy excellent reason for so doing."

The contemplation of her father's useful, devoted, and unselfish life strengthened his daughter's belief that the spirit rather than

the letter is the one thing needful in religion. She had been quite astonished when, during his last illness, her father called her to him, seemingly troubled that her faith should be so vague. "He would feel far happier," he said, "and more at peace with himself, had he done something definite to crystallize his daughter's belief in a stricter dogma."

When Oriel became engaged, she realized with a sense of relief and thankfulness that there was no essential difference of religion to form a barrier between herself and Christian. She was profoundly grateful to her father for having made no definite break with the church in whose fold she had been born. The situation in regard to religion, at least, was simple. Christian, while nominally a Catholic, was not, apparently, fervent in his practice. His uncle was far more rigid, and would have bitterly opposed his nephew's marriage with a non-Catholic. Though it would have been impossible for the girl conscientiously to "join the church," had her family been Protestants, nothing was more easy and natural than for her

to remain, technically, under a shelter which she had never formally quitted.

The only element of unhappiness, on which neither had counted, was the unexpected stand taken by Christian's relatives toward their marriage.

It was not Christian who suffered from this, for, after a first movement of an angry surprise, he had shrugged his shoulders, and remained sublimely indifferent to the disapproval of his California aunt. As for his French uncle, whom he really loved, that was another matter, but one which he felt sure would "come right with time." Once in Oriel's sphere of influence, "Oncle Antoine" would probably become the chief victim of her charm. But Christian's indifference could not diminish the pain with which his wife beheld the attitude adopted toward her by the Duchess. This lady had not acquired the great gift, or art, of being well bred. She was stupid, biting, arrogant, and used no light touch in demonstrating beyond a doubt her opinion of the terrible *mésalliance* which her

nephew had made, as well as the risk he ran of ruining his "prospects."

The offended letter which the Duke had written lent colour to this presentation of the case, and gradually the subject of Christian's relations became so painful to Oriel that they ceased to be a possible topic of conversation between the youthful pair. Silence upon it, however, did not banish thought. With that acuteness of feeling, that *sensibilité* which her husband told her she ought to "get over," Oriel suffered from this state of things and often, moved by a spirit of reform which was almost comic, she tried to convert her volatile husband to the "importance of being earnest" in a more thoroughly American manner. Although the hard school of self-support had taught her the use of tact and repression, it had not changed or modified the intensity of her feelings and few suspected, perhaps her husband least of all her acquaintance, what an ardent and undisciplined heart was concealed beneath the quiet dignity and easy graciousness of her manners. . . .

Shortly after their establishment in Washington, the young couple found themselves in the near neighbourhood of friends from the North Shore who they little thought would so soon foregather, and whose vicinity was to play a part of capital importance in their destiny.

Michael Edgar, the jolly toastmaster of that memorable "Fens" dinner, had been nominated to a post in one of the departments at Washington. Almost immediately after this appointment he had announced his engagement to the very same young woman upon whom his facetious speech had produced such an unpleasant effect. Their marriage, following hard upon the news of betrothal, was not a surprise to Boston, for it had been long suspected that Miss Clay would not be averse to changing the routine life of an eight-years' belle for "pastures new," the field of political ambition and desired social leadership.

During the years that succeeded her "coming out" Miss Clay had pursued what might be denominated as a "vigorous militant matri-

monial campaign.” Graduates from the great neighbouring university, in successive relays, laid their susceptible hearts at her feet, but in none did Ida find the requisites she demanded in a husband. Once, indeed, she came near making a very brilliant match, but in some manner quite unexplained, except by a rapid conversational footnote thrown out by her friends (of course he behaved like a cad) nothing came of the short engagement. After this incident Ida, who was nearing the rubicon of a thirtieth birthday, altered her policy to one of “watchful waiting.” In this manner she had carefully “observed” Christian de Troyes, with the eye of a graceful lynx, and about three weeks after his unexpected marriage she herself announced what her friends had called an “incipient” engagement to her faithful adorer, Michael Edgar. The vivacious, popular “Mike” had long been an exponent of this purely American product, of matter-of-fact devotion, which often conceals one of the highest types of chivalric sentiment. At stated intervals he offered his hand to the

fair object of his affection, who accepted his attentions with a complete assumption of "divine right." Such cases of permanent flirtation always fill foreign visitors to America with amused and cynical wonder. Christian always spoke of Edgar as "*L'amant en titre*" or "*le collage de Mlle. Clay*," and Oriel, who disliked levity of that sort, practically explained the real situation, bringing forward numerous instances of unselfish friendship, "contented to serve without reward." Christian always laughed at what he called her Southern institution of "steady company," and also at her indignant denials of his imputations upon this particular instance in point.

He continued to speak, before their marriage, of Mike's "*Liaison Dangereuse*," and referred to the wedding in November as an event which had, at length, happily regularized a very doubtful situation. Aside from such jests, Christian welcomed the newcomers with much pleasure. He felt a real affection for Michael Edgar, who interested him as a thorough American type, with his faithful bulldog face,

jolly and humorous. He was at heart serious and uncompromising on questions of honour and principle; he was equally strict in his observance of that code known as "club etiquette." Christian was fond of teasing his friend upon the importance which he attached to this institution of the club. The mixture of awe and respect which is shown to the laws of such organizations by many who look upon the Decalogue as effete struck him as funny; but Mike quite refused to laugh with him on this subject, though he joined him in every other sort of amusement, especially those games which entailed a sporting risk, from golf and bridge to billiards and poker. Christian highly recommended the companionship of "Mrs. Mike" to his young wife, for, like many Frenchmen, he attached much importance to the punctual fulfilling of social duties. These duties Oriel often rebelled against; she could see no particular reason for the eager pursuit of so many persons who showed no desire to be found; but her husband knew that he would have a powerful ally in

Mrs. Edgar, who promptly accepted the vocation of making Oriel perceive the necessity of this species of social boredom. Ida loved the world and all worldliness. No one could "get through more calls" in an afternoon and, it may be justly said, leave behind her a more generally charming impression. Exceedingly pretty, graceful and well dressed, she had mastered in an incredibly short while the ins and outs of Washington etiquette. Names, ranks, and the diplomatic list she had at her fingers' ends. Christian approved of her.

It was rare for him to pronounce encomiums on American women, whom he generally called "forth putting," but he invariably characterized "Madame Mique" as perfectly *bien élevée*. His appreciation of a woman essentially different from his wife in taste and manners, probably gave Oriel no greater pleasure than such a predilection usually confers upon those in her position. Nevertheless, she accepted the older woman's guidance rather meekly on the whole, and it was, perhaps, even with a certain satisfaction that she gave in completely to her

husband's wishes in this particular instance, thereby salving her conscience when the occasion arrived for holding out against him in things more important. There were so many questions where their tastes and traditions varied. A compromise had to be arrived at so often between them that she could readily give way in such a minor detail as this.

Thus it happened that she spent many an afternoon in the well-appointed coupé or limousine which sundry old ladies were so ready to place at Mrs. Edgar's disposal. It was one of the fair Bostonian's favourite maxims that it was extremely silly to pay a chauffeur when so many friends had motors. It is true she possessed and herself ran a small electric runabout which did very well for morning errands, but this vehicle was not very convenient for visits. The distances were too long to accomplish much on foot, and, as Oriel herself benefited from her friend's clever management, it would have seemed ungracious to criticize her methods. Still she often felt shocked by them and once, after

a particularly brazen hint on Ida's part, couldn't help mentioning to Christian on her return that she failed to comprehend how Mrs. Edgar could bring herself to quite such "barefaced fishing for free transportation." Christian, who she felt certain would share her point of view, replied laughingly, "Well, I can't understand doing anything else when you want it."

Just as a difference of taste in jokes may, we are told, become a great strain upon the affections, so frequent divergence in traditions and custom form one of the chief stumbling blocks on the matrimonial path when husband and wife belong to a different class or an alien nation.

Oriel was extremely intense in her beliefs and prejudices; she was also very outspoken. Her nature led her to "thresh out" any small question in debate with her husband, being like most of her fellow-countrywomen constitutionally argumentative. Now Christian was easygoing, in words at least, and inclined to follow in discussion the path of least re-

sistance. He seemingly adopted her point of view, generally well set forth; it came, therefore, inevitably as a shock to his wife's pride, and a more serious blow to her belief in his loyalty, when she found Christian, after one of his apparent conversions, placidly proceeding to do or say the things she thought her eloquence had turned him away from.

She found it difficult also to obtain a clear "profession of faith" from her husband on many important questions of abstract morality, and this indifference worried her. He had a fashion of waiving aside questions which she considered of prime interest in the state with a brief shrug and the remark, "*Après tout, vous savez bien, ma chère, que tout cela n'a aucune importance,*" and often her indignation at his levity was equalled by her disappointment. Now Christian rarely criticized his wife, maintaining toward her, in spite of any little matrimonial rubs, the same attitude of lover-like admiration. She remained happily obtuse to the possibility that she herself might ever fall short of his standards and ideals. Quite

unused to criticism from those she loved, their first real disagreement assumed larger proportions to both than if they had, so to speak, "kept their hands in practice" by frequent bickerings. This incident took place after about three months' residence in Washington. It caused a breach in their amicable relations. To Oriel, at least, the twelve hours of misunderstanding seemed very tragic. The innocent cause of their quarrel was Mrs. Porter-North. This excellent lady had presented the young bride with a gown made in that winter's extreme of fashion. The train terminated in two long tails, siren-wise, and the hem was slit in front some seven inches above the ankle.

Christian had at once pronounced this gown hideously fishy, besides being *inconvenante*, but Oriel had expressed her desire to wear it one evening when they were invited to dine at the Embassy. She had been so often, she said, that her other raiment was a thrice-told tale. To this argument her husband answered with what he considered

finality: "You cannot wear it as it is," and she with equal determination retorted: "That is too bad, for I have no time to alter it before dinner. I have a long list of calls to make with Ida." As they were driving up Sixteenth Street she spoke of the difficulty to her companion, who at once remarked: "Dear me, what stupid fools husbands always are. Wear it anyway, everyone does now, and he'll get used to it all right. You can't begin disciplining him too early." This phrase produced in her auditor a sudden determination to obey Christian, but she said nothing and thought no more of the trifling incident.

What was her amazement on returning to the little house in I Street to find Christian sitting upstairs in her room busily engaged in sewing up (apparently by main strength and force of conviction) the slit which had been in contention. He had sought his wife's work-box for the necessary implements. The long tails lay, already shorn, upon the floor. A pair of scissors was in evidence and the box stood open on a chair beside him.

At first Oriel was angry, then something not only ludicrous, but touching, in the spectacle of her husband solicitously labouring that she might appear well before the world, struck a chord both of tears and laughter, and she stood in the doorway giggling hysterically.

Christian looked up. He showed no sign of sharing his wife's mirth. On the contrary, it was with a dark frown and most peremptory manner that he extended toward her the open sewing-case and said with a much stronger French oath than he habitually used: "What is this thing, and what the — are you doing with it?"

In the bottom of Oriel's pretty box lay a small and businesslike-looking revolver. She picked it up, remarking with a sarcastic inflection: "I should think you might be able to see without help that it is my pistol." Christian spoke with another oath: "And would you kindly inform me what you might be doing with that perfectly absurd weapon? It is grotesque, horribly common to associate the idea of you with a *fait divers*." Oriel drew

herself up haughtily. "I don't know what you mean by a *fait divers*," she said. "My father gave me my revolver; he considered it not only proper but necessary for a girl placed as I was to have adequate means of defence, and your calling it 'grotesque' is an insult to him as well as to me." Christian replied: "It is faintly conceivable to me that at the time you mention there may have been some excuse for such a thing, but I trust that your father would have had sense enough to perceive that as my wife it is completely absurd and unfitting to keep a revolver. The Goddess Diana, parading as a female Tartarin, would not look sillier. Throw the thing away." He spoke in a tone of command. Oriel's answer was to remove the small pistol from the workbox, remarking, as she handled the weapon with the touch of one perfectly familiar with its workings: "Why, there is *still* one charge left; I thought they were all used up." Then she placed it in a small wall safe, where she usually bestowed her modest jewels, and calmly turned the key. Christian was very pale; he spoke

no word, but arose and left the house. He returned quite late, and they were not punctual at dinner that evening, in Washington a very heinous offence. As their herdic slowly toiled up the hill Oriel laid her hand on her husband's arm and began rather timidly: "I am sorry. If you really want me to give up—" He interrupted with some asperity: "You will do me a great favour in abstaining from reference to this subject. You have quite effectually showed me my present place, that of a meek American husband with no authority to prevent his wife from making all kinds of a fool of herself. The incident is quite closed."

"Rouse him: make after him,
poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets; incense
her kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile
climate dwell,
Plague him with flies: though
that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such changes of
vexation on't
As it may lose some colour."

CHAPTER IV

THE UNSEEN HAND

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MRS. SEYMOUR and Ida were talking about the Troyes one morning, when the former said meditatively: "I must confess that it seems to me very demeaning for them to treat that old darky the way they do; they actually allow him to be quite familiar! Why, if you hadn't assured me that the Troyes were of good blood I wouldn't believe it, really, on account of the way Christian behaves to that servant; it's not what I call aristocratic. As for Oriel, of course, she's been associating with nothing but people of that sort for years, and I suppose has got used to having only that kind to speak to."

Ida smiled. "Well," she remarked, "you needn't worry a bit about Christian's blood; my husband knows all about the family;

they're all right as to descent. Of course, there was a rather nasty scandal at Montreux—no, I really can't tell you about that—it wouldn't seem friendly."

The august lady of fixed social principles, who was Mrs. Seymour, would have been quite shocked had she witnessed a little scene which took place that very afternoon in the Troyes' drawing-room, where, while waiting Oriel's return, Ida entered into conversation with old Jefferson in much the same tone of half-bantering geniality which his own master and mistress used toward him. Of course, neither Mrs. Seymour, nor indeed any one else, could ever know of it, and this fact often made a considerable difference in Ida's conduct.

"Well, Jeff, so you don't do everything so remarkably in the South after all?"

"Why, of co'se we does, Mis'. What you mean I been done wrong?"

"Why, the hearth! Just look! It's not been swept for an age!"

"Land's sake, Mis' Edgar, no good nigger ever sweeps up the ash long as fires is lit!

My ole master wouldn't hev it touched befo' the month of May. Jes' kep' it swep' up 'gainst the back log, so. You git a good, hot blaze right off, like that, and you've got a nice kivver handy, if she gits too lively." Then with a gleeful grin he added: "Guess it's you folks up No'th as don't know about fires."

"Well, certainly I never heard of such a thing," said Ida. "If it's your people's custom, why doesn't my man do it?"

"I declare, I dunno, Mis'," replied old Jeff. "Mebbe you've got one of dese heah common, Washington free niggers working for you, and if you'll 'scuse me for saying so, they ain't been raised right! They don't know nuthin' scasely! They don't move in the same circles as us Virginia coloured folk, so it stan's to reason they can't learn nuthin', indeed I certainly think they don't move in circles at all. There ain't no sort of quality about them."

He might have continued almost indefinitely upon this topic had he not suddenly espied Christian and Oriel approaching down I Street. Hastily exclaiming, "'Scuse me, Mis'," Jeff

moved with superb pomposity toward the front door.

Left alone, Ida dropped on her knees beside the extinguished hearth as though to better inspect the Southern method of fire-building, then with a quick, deft gesture, she placed some small object in the heaped up ashes behind the back log, and, rising hastily, greeted the Troyes with her most charming smile. "I've come to tell both you nice people that I count upon you absolutely for Tuesday night. I'm going to give my sister-in-law a dinner; you simply must come." "But of course we'll come," answered Oriel, and to prove her alacrity, she at once noted the engagement upon a small block which hung beside the telephone. "Now sit down and take tea with us, Ida, and do tell Chris that funny story about the hoodoo; he's always ever so much interested in popular superstitions. I half think he believes most of them himself."

"Of course I do," said Christian, calmly. "To deny the force of malevolent influences

doesn't weaken them in the least. A hundred years ago we knew nothing about electric currents. In this century we know less than the dark ages did in regard to certain natural phenomena, which—as we don't understand them—science finds it more simple to deny that they exist.”

“Well,” exclaimed Ida, “you are absurd. I never supposed that in our enlightened age any one could be so old-fashioned.”

“Neither did I,” said Oriel, “but he will be all the more interested in the story.”

Ida, however, seemed quite reluctant to unfold the tale in question. “I really ought not to talk about it,” she said, with unusual determination. “You see Christian is a ‘Dip,’ and my precious spouse is in the department. Mike would think it almost a *secret professionnel*.”

“Never mind,” said Christian. “I see—someone put something somewhere sometime and someone else has now found it.”

Ida's eyes were quite round with astonishment.

Troyes laughed:

"I can guess more than that" he said. "In the light of recent happenings—in fact I would be willing to hazard the statement that I know very well in whose desk the 'hoodoo' was found and perhaps might go further and even risk a supposition as to who placed it there . . . always reasoning from cause and effect, and enlightened as I said by recent happenings. However, don't worry, I won't speak about it, and will only display one piece of curiosity. Admitting that a hoodoo has been found quite mysteriously, what has become of it?"

Ida looked grave:

"Really I can't joke about it. I dislike those things, they seem to me serious. So I asked Ar—— (the person who found it, I mean) to give the ugly demon to me, and I never rested until I had dropped the horrid thing in the river. I am sorry to have mentioned it, especially before a wizard like you! What a dangerous super-subtle Latin! But I won't talk about it any more—I should give

myself away. Besides, I am really afraid of those malevolent charms. It's a comfort to think that the historic 'hoodoo' is at this moment safely lying in the mud of the Potomac."

If Ida was superstitious, this trait, generally attributed to the ignorant, certainly did not diminish her extreme social cleverness and worldly wisdom. There could be no doubt that she had made a wonderful "monitress." Oriel, who reckoned little on her own great beauty and girlish charm, while wondering at her success in Washington, attributed the great popularity which she found herself enjoying to the untiring efforts of her friend.

For young Mme. de Troyes began to be invited far oftener than she cared to accept. It would have been pleasanter to possess more leisure and independence, she thought, especially to see more of her husband, but Christian always said: "While we are unofficial 'Dips,' we cannot neglect the whole duty of our tribe. Afterward we may thank God for relief and do as we please. I am perfectly ready to resign, you know."

To this there was but one answer. To request his resignation, meant making peace with the old Duke and returning to live with him at Aube-le-Châtel. Oriel was not quite prepared for this alternative, so she chose the lesser evil and went much into society.

Ida was fond of saying, "Isn't Ellie a darling? I am quite proud of my protégés, I assure you! Such a pair of turtles as they both are, and inexpressibly young and foolish, but quite too sweet."

On one such occasion, outspoken Mrs. Wilmcote burst into characteristic fulminations. Ida flushed and pretended not to hear: in fact she rarely remained long in the same room with the "Westerner." As she slipped out this time Mrs. Wilmcote exclaimed: "How do you manage to stand that insupportable woman's pretentious prattle, I wonder? She 'protect' Oriel forsooth! I could box her ears for saying so. Why she hangs on to her like a limpet and actually asks for invitations to the same houses."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Seymour admiringly,

"she's the cleverest woman in Washington for that! I never saw any one with such a perfect instinct for success, 'social flair,' I call it. She can tell you months beforehand just who or what will be the rage, and then she just goes to work and makes them hers. She has first-class political genius. I admire Mrs. Edgar immensely."

Ida, the monitress, set one example which her protégée neglected to follow. In fact, Oriel could not tolerate a practice which she found was indulged in by more than one of her small set.

This habit consisted in discussing between rubbers, or over the teacups, the respective foibles and failings of husbands, the general and the particular—this was done in much the same tone which might have been used in speaking of an interesting but rather unpleasant disease. "There never was quite such a mean man as Dick Seymour," remarked his faithful spouse. "My dear! I am sure that he can't be a circumstance to Mike! Why the other evening——"

Often, indeed, Oriel had been obliged to employ both tact and discretion in order to avoid this burning topic. An attitude of dignified reticence was sometimes difficult to maintain, without thereby administering a snub to the divers interlocutors who found such pleasure in questioning her on what they chose to call "the Latin temperament."

After one luncheon, during which she had several times been appealed to as the supreme authority on French traits, Oriel, on the defensive, laughingly replied:

"I really know nothing at all about them. I have never set foot in France and, except for the members of the Embassy here, some of whom are Americans, I have not met any French people. In fact, my old professor in Virginia—who was a decayed gentleman and liked father—is the only one I ever really saw anything of; then, you know, so far I have married only one French husband, so it would seem rather absurd if I should begin on the strength of that to judge a whole nation."

Ida took her up with some asperity:

"It's quite absurd to talk like that," said she. "Mrs. Seymour, like myself, realizes that there are certain types which only differ in minor details. We all know that French people have quite different standards from us on almost everything—about morality, for instance—and one can judge them, if not by individuals, at least by our acquaintance with their literature. Have you read *Noblesse Américaine*, by the way? There is something quite typical!" And they all began to discuss, with much animation, the characters and plot of the clever story, whose gentle American heroine is made the victim of an unscrupulous social system built according to its author on lies, corruption, and deceit.

This conversation, which took place in January when the Washington season was at its height, produced a disagreeable impression on Oriel. She had not indulged enough in worldliness to acquire that worldly wisdom which discounts nonsense and absurdities, or mastered the art of separating wheat from chaff in the quantity of gossip which was

talked about her. She was a girl of very high and simple ideals. Disillusion, when it came, was correspondingly violent.

Her practical training had enlightened her only as to the "tricks of the trade." Surely the leisure, cultured, and highly educated classes, especially those centred about the Government in Washington, were different from the common, often "shady" people with whom her profession had brought her into passing contact.

She was young enough to take that which she heard categorically stated, quite seriously. Often some unwarranted scandal, spoken over the teacups, concerning a really superior man or woman, shook her belief, not only in the victim of such slander, but in her whole new world. She was much worried and disturbed, when, after the conversation above mentioned, Ida said to her suddenly, as they were driving home:

"You don't know how I admire any one who can marry a foreigner? Of course I am far too jealous to have a moment's peace if I

did such a thing, but I can appreciate stoicism in others, and realize that a person has to be as fine a character as you, dear, to be able to get along so nicely and quietly. Why, I should be a perfect tiger. But I suppose it takes a poor weak little thing like me to condescend to jealousy!"

Oriel answered, wishing to avoid the personal equation, "Why should any one be jealous without cause? You speak as if all men were bad."

Ida sniffed. "My dear, if you are going to be quite so naïve as that you can certainly never live in France!"

And Oriel, for the first time really goaded, retorted: "If I believed everything and everyone about me as evil as your mind makes them I could not live in the world at all." Then, seeing that Ida was angry, she hastened to add: "But it isn't because I am young that I think well of humanity in general. Take Mrs. Wilmcote, for instance, who is certainly old and experienced. I believe her to be both better and wiser than most people! Yet, she

is confident of the essential goodness in mankind, and you can't deny that she has seen a lot!"

Ida smiled with subtle meaning, then laughed sharply. "Not deny it; I should hope not! Why, that old bird is up to anything! I would be willing to bet that she will be Duchesse de Troyes before you are! She has had the old Duke on a string—been his mistress, in short, for years! I thought, of course, your husband had told you all about that."

Oriel felt the cold, sick sensation which generally accompanied her loss of an illusion. Then she pulled herself together and answered: "I am sure you must be mistaken; she is not at all that kind, besides—when can she have seen Christian's uncle? She hasn't been much in Paris—she told me so herself—and certainly she never lived at Aube-le-Châtel."

"No, indeed, she didn't quite dare to go to Aube-le-Châtel," answered Ida. "But she had a villa at Montreux, and has lived there for years—ever since the Troyes family

went there. Of course, your husband has told you about that!"

"No, indeed," answered Oriel, somewhat disturbed, "I had no idea that Christian had ever been there."

"Well," exclaimed Ida, "that is queer! I'm awfully sorry I said anything about it, then. Please just forget that I spoke of it, won't you? I'm an awful goose!"

Now, this remark, coming at a moment when Oriel's confidence in her world had been severely tried, was a decided blow. What was this implication of a secret which her husband shared with others and concealed from herself? It could not be an oversight, for Christian was particularly communicative about his past life. He loved to talk about the days of his boyhood, spent among the forests of Aube-le-Châtel, his excursions and incursions, predatory and otherwise, his various adventures and the scrapes from which he seemed always to be extricated by the devotion of the old family butler, Principe, and the eventual fond indulgence of his doting uncle.

After this boyish period came two years spent with honour at the École des Chartres, then military service in a dragoon regiment, during which he was in lodgings at Versailles, always keeping, however, a *pied-à-terre* at his grandmother's, for this old lady owned a spacious hotel in the Rue Vaneau. He had never mentioned a residence in any other section of France, nor had she noticed a long period in her husband's rather short life which remained unaccounted for by his narration.

Ida's prudent warning, "Forget that I said anything," certainly produced a contrary effect from the words themselves. Oriel could not obliterate this question from her mind, and it was with a feeling of self-consciousness—almost of guilty prying—that she approached the subject that evening during a talk with her husband.

Circumlocution was not Oriel's way, and possibly some subtle difference from her usual manner warned her husband against surprise, as she asked with assumed carelessness, "Have you ever travelled much, Christian?—

seen the interesting parts of your own country—Brittany, for instance, or Switzerland, the Pyrenees, or the Alps?”

“Oh, no,” he answered, “I have never had time to travel, except tiny trips—my aunt, the nun, you know, took me over to Lourdes on a pilgrimage when I was little—it was horrible. But the nice things we shall see together!”

“And the Alps?” asked Oriel.

“Well, I hope that you won’t make me see any snow mountains,” returned Christian, with a shudder; “of all the abominable things in nature, they are the worst! No Alps for me, thank you—except to cross them going to Venice or Rome—that must be our first excursion.”

When suspicion once enters a mind, all things point the same way. Oriel felt certain that in eluding her direct question Christian had been intentionally evasive. She abandoned the direct form of attack and adopted strategy, in which art she was no adept. With the same laboured carelessness she remarked, “I suppose that you don’t have

intimate friends in France—half as much as we do?”

“Not quite, I fancy, but we make more of the family.”

“And yet, for instance, you know Mrs. Wilmcote well?”

“Not I, personally,” said Christian, “except that she is my godmother—she went to the convent with my aunt and visited our family in order to be with ‘Tante Camille’ before she left the world, but I wasn’t born then.”

“Oh,” said his wife, “was that it? I thought you might have seen a good deal of her at Montreux!”

She felt her husband’s eyes searching hers for a moment as if to sound the depth of her knowledge. Then he answered very slowly:

“I can’t imagine what put that idea into your head. I know nothing whatever about Montreux, and trust that I shall never be called upon to set foot there.”

If it had been written in Christian’s eyes that he was not speaking the truth, his wife would not have felt more convinced. From

that day poor Oriel was ceaselessly tormented with doubts and thick-coming fancies. She tried to discipline herself, but the thought that her husband was concealing something goaded her to an endless circle of unanswered self-questioning. What and wherefore was the mystery which she felt hovering over part of his life?

Memory tortured little phrases he had let fall into strange meanings. She recollected, for instance, that in the early days of their engagement he had once said, "And to think of this paradise coming to me! Of course I never thought that I could possibly marry."

This stray sentence, which she had interpreted at the time as a rather extravagant compliment to an undreamed of charm in herself, suddenly assumed a different colour—suggested a meaning which she feared, but dared not fathom.

A sick desire possessed her to know the worst of the nation to which she now theoretically belonged, and, remembering Ida's hint, she sought for enlightenment among

those semi-modern novels, Maupassant, Flaubert, and Daudet, which her father, encourager though he was of style and standard authors, had set apart on a forbidden shelf. His collection had long since been dispersed, but Ida had a large French library, and readily placed many books at her friend's disposal.

Oriel began to read Maupassant, and with sentiments of horror, disillusion, and a complete overturning of her preconceived ideas concerning family life, pored over the pages of *Pierre and Jean*. It was, to her, a terrible experience, and one of which she never spoke; then, someone told her—Ida, probably—that *Boule de Suif* was "very funny," and she tried that. This masterpiece of cynicism, the relentless flaying of hypocrisy, in which the so-called respectable people are the cowards and villains, is not good reading for the young, though it is probably one of the cleverest works either in French or any other language; but Oriel read no more Maupassant and turned to Daudet, Flaubert, and Bourget. One day Ida threw in a more typical volume of modern

literature, but its author went so far beyond any of the others, in repulsive presentation of facts already sufficiently unpleasant, that Oriel cast it aside, after two chapters, and sought an early opportunity of returning this book to the lender.

Ida apologized. It was one of her sister-in-law's novels, she said, the newest sensation; she herself had not read it. This sister-in-law began to assume a great place in Washington gossip. Mrs. Cassie Edgar was spoken of as a most charming and beautiful woman, a young divorcée, newly returned from a trip to Egypt. She had resumed her maiden name with the married prefix, Mrs. Casenave Edgar, and was known to the younger set as "Mrs. Cassie," while Ida became "Mrs. Mike."

Oriel asked why she had divorced, and was briefly informed by Ida that her husband was "no good," "though," she added meditatively, "I fancy he had some grievances on his side. Poor Jim; she is the most terrible flirt; the still, deep kind; she led him a dance, too, I suppose, but that always serves a man right,

I think, nasty, low things they are, all of them. You'd better look out for your French husband, dear! Cassie has always been a great winner with foreigners. She has just that little spice we Anglo-Saxons generally lack. You're coming to meet her at my house next week, you know—Tuesday—the dinner I engaged you for. Of course, I have to give an entertainment to celebrate her return, and I am going to kill all the birds and the bores with the same stone. I shall mingle diplomats, legislators, and state department in a compact mass with the hoi polloi. I have even asked that horrid Wilmcote woman; quite on your account, my dear, and Christian's, for I can't bear the old prig, and I am sure that she equally abominates me."

“ ‘O, these men, these men!
Dost thou in conscience think,—
 tell me, Emilia,
That there be women do abuse
 their husbands
In such gross kind?’
 ‘There be some such
 no question.’ ”

CHAPTER V

“CŒURS DES HOMMES”

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O RIEL was sitting alone upstairs the next afternoon when Michael Edgar was announced. It took her a few minutes to put aside her work and descend to the drawing-room. On entering, she was surprised to find her guest seated before a small piano, extracting from its yellow keys a full-toned and tragic melody, of which she would have supposed the player, and the instrument itself, equally incapable.

Under his heavy-looking fingers the strings responded with almost magic sympathy, and the ugly drawing-room suddenly became resonant with the strange Oriental mystery and sadness of the Steppes.

“Why, Mike,” she exclaimed—for in the

facile intercourse of the small "inner circle," they were already at Christian names, and even nicknames—"that is Tschaikowsky! I had no idea that you could do that!"

He looked at her quizzically. "Isn't that just like the world and my luck," he said. "No one is willing to recognize the serious tragic artist beneath the buffoon! You think, from my face and conversation, that I'm only good for ragtime. Now a cuss like Christian, with his name and his face, is believed by all the world to be capable of poetic flights, though I'm convinced he can't play *Mon ami Pierrot* with more than one finger. But that's the world all over: a poor devil called Mike, and with 'Mike' stamped on his countenance as well, has no sort of a chance, even if he is a pupil of Letchesky."

Oriel laughed; she was beginning to be accustomed to Michael's sarcastic style. "You are quite right about Christian and the one finger," she said, "but not as to the rest; I always recognized you as a misunderstood

genius, Mike, so please go on playing; I have been starved for good music."

He played on, and Oriel, very sensitive to all forms of artistic expression, sat spellbound in the twilight; she did not even hear Christian enter, but sprang to her feet with an eager smile of welcome when she saw him at her side. Michael wandered off into *Le Jardin sous la pluie*, as his auditor exclaimed, "Oh, Christian, he has made me forget everything—calls, and Washington etiquette, and the Duchesse *née* Jones, and all my troubles, even you!"

At the word "forget," a look of guilty terror crossed Mike's expressive bulldog countenance. "The devil take it," he exclaimed. "I forgot what I came for; my wife will flay me alive! I was to get you to come and dine with her tonight, Oriel. A double bridge, a 'hen' bridge! She wanted me to ask you to telephone right away, and it's almost an hour that I've been here! You must say 'yes'; it will be a charming occasion, I don't think! Fuss and cackle and quarrel over cards.

Why, in the name of wonder, Ida wants to do that sort of thing, heaven alone knows, but if you wish to see real sport, Oriel, you would better accept! The gloves will be off, or I don't know those particular women."

Oriel was embarrassed. She abhorred such functions, and, besides, had been looking forward to this rare occasion of dining alone with her husband, but Michael's over-frank remarks made it difficult to decline politely. Christian intervened.

"Sorry," he said, "Oriel can't go to your wife this evening; she has an engagement to dine with me, and I can't, and won't, let her off."

Mike's face again showed an almost comic terror. "That's all right, and you are sensible people, but that excuse won't do for my Ida. She doesn't ever understand keeping promises between husband and wife!"

"Very well," said Christian, lightly, and taking down the telephone, he added: "Anything to please."

Calling the number he began brazenly:

“Is that you, madame? Yes. This is Troyes. My wife wants me to say that she is awfully sorry about tonight, but we’ve been engaged since a long time to dine with Mrs. Pen-dragon.”

Mike was chuckling delightedly. “Well,” he said, “of all the cheeky Frenchmen!”

Oriel looked serious, and Christian observing it, remarked: “The truth is far too precious to waste all the time; besides, I believe in reciprocity,—people that don’t respect promises can’t expect me to waste any of my rare truth on them.”

“Besides which,” answered Mike, falling in with his humour, “any lie is justifiable in a case of self-preservation and *force majeure*, and it’s certainly self-preservation to get out of a ‘hen’ bridge game!”

“Naturally,” said Christian, “but where do you come in on this entertainment, Mike?”

“Oh, she sends me off to the club,” Mike replied; then, with sudden bitterness, “or anywhere else so as not to be alone with me.”

There was an uncomfortable pause—the

buffoon was forgetting his rôle; then Christian said, kindly, "Stay here and dine with Mrs. Pendragon; you can even be Mrs. Pendragon if you like, and deliver superb disquisitions, just as she does on times and manners."

"Oh, no, thank you," said poor Mike, "I know at least enough to stay out of the way when I'm not wanted, whether it happens to be Ida's way or yours. You two don't need any third, more luck for you! . . . Besides I have to go home."

"Home," echoed Christian, "I thought you just said that you were on your way to the club!"

"Well, and so I am." There was now no possibility of mistaking the sarcastic bitterness of his tone. "The club, the Cosmopolitan, that is about as near as I come to having any home."

Christian accompanied Mike to the door and returned frowning. "Was he talking like that before I came in?" he asked.

Oriel, too, seemed troubled. "He hardly talked at all, but he played a good deal and

seemed to me very 'queer,' very unlike his usual self."

Christian remained silent a moment, then he broke out in his most un-American manner of frankly expressing what most of Oriel's compatriots may think, but do not say, of another man. "Poor devil, he's had much more than is good for him already, and his wife, triple distilled fool, sends him off to get more! Well, it's none of my business, I suppose; but how fortunate it is, dear, that you and I are quite perfect and above human failings."

Oriel was horrified; she had not thought of this explanation of the rather peculiar manner in which Michael Edgar had revealed himself and his unhappiness, that afternoon.

"Oh, Christian! do you really think that Mike has been drinking? Poor Ida!"

"Poor Ida," returned her husband; "I should say 'Poor Mike!' She turns him out of the house and sends him to drink at the club, and then she will tell her friends that he's a dissipated brute, and they'll all help her divorce him! He has been her slave for

years, and never has had, and never will have, any reward but his slavery. In fact, I suppose he had more satisfaction during the *collage* than since they've been married. Married!—charming arrangement, that kind of marriage,—and all you Americans will say 'Poor Ida,' like the poor cat that ate the canary."

"I wish, Christian, that you didn't have quite so much common sense and would leave me just a few illusions! I thought that you really and sincerely liked Ida!"

"Well, and so I do," he answered, with the whimsicality which she found so very upsetting to her fixed standards. "She is perfectly adapted to any purpose that I am likely to put her to! She is *bien élevée*—in public, at least—and does splendidly to take you about, when I'm not there! As for the relations between any other husbands and wives, they are emphatically their own business, and not ours."

This highly utilitarian view of friendship was hardly calculated to please an idealist.

Oriel looked troubled. “You have a very peculiar philosophy of life, Christian,” she said. “I don’t quite see how you reconcile it with religion.”

“I don’t have to reconcile it; I quarrelled with God some time ago, when I came up against the naked truth. You say the truth is beautiful and pretend to like it, but it’s only because you never saw it! I did, and I have never been on terms with my creator since—until I met you—and now nothing else but you matters. You alone are enough, dearest, to save me in this world; and the next too, if there is one! How does it go in English? ‘Much will be forgiven *à celui qui a beaucoup aimé!*’ Promise that you won’t ever send me off to the club, darling, in order to dine with a pack of cackling old hens! I shall go straight to the devil if you do, and get there before Mike! Tell me, Orri, will you ever abandon me for old hens?”

“No,” she answered, “for no one but a young man more attractive than you are, and ever so much better looking.”

"Why, Oriel! What progress! Are you really beginning to make fun of such a solemn thing as love? I am afraid French influence must be demoralizing if it makes you forget some of your delicious prudery. But now be serious again and tell me if you really like me."

The desire for self-expression, which often leads one to conceal the truth in a jesting answer made Oriel reply:

"Really like you, you conceited foreigner! I am not sure that I like you at all, and quite certain that I don't approve of you! I do love you, though, in a perfectly idiotic manner, and you have demoralized me so much that I have not even the grace to be ashamed of it."

Christian laughed. "That is all I require," he said. "You may keep all your platonism and sisterly sweet hand-in-hand business for the old hens; and as for feeling ashamed of being in love, that is the way to be really idiotic, since love is the only divine wisdom. Even your funny Puritan God in America

can't deny that, or if He does He contradicts himself.”

After this rather daring statement he added, in a tone of seriousness which indicated depths of sadness usually kept carefully hidden: “Ah, my dear, when I see Mike—and others—I often think of a line I heard once in some opera: ‘Si j’étais Dieu, j’aurais pitié des cœurs des hommes!’”

He put his arms around her shoulders. “Please don’t be queer and aloof, and offended, darling, if I do anything you don’t like; it is only because I love you too much so you must forgive me since I am sure you won’t let the God of Israel be more generous than you.”

There were often moments when Oriel was completely perplexed by her husband, and often times, also, when she doubted his sincerity. This happened especially when he was talking to another than herself, and she remained an auditor; but he always succeeded when they were alone together in setting her doubts at rest. She did not know whether

this was because of some compelling hypnotic quality in his deep grey eyes—that indefinable gift of charm which dominated her reason; or whether—and she preferred trying to believe the second hypothesis—he appealed to a higher instinct or inspiration in her, which was superior to reason, and which is so well called in French, “*L’intelligence du cœur.*” Certainly, when Christian made love the doubts which distressed her mind melted away in a wave of feeling which seemed to lift her out of her usual self, transported her to a new level, where she became happy, confident, triumphant; and on this particular evening neither of them found any cause whatever to regret bridge, the club, or even the majestic presence of Mrs. Pendragon.

As she stood looking down on Christian, who slept with an expression on his face of peculiarly childlike innocence, Oriel began to wonder—and it marked a new epoch in her sentimental life—whether, perhaps, the rigidity of her much cherished principles could be at fault: Was Christian right? Was truth too

vast to be measured by petty standards, and expressed in a little hoard of maxims? The thought was new and disturbing. Then she remembered one of those axiomatic phrases, which so often render the obscure intelligible. She recalled the wise mother's answer about her little boy, caught in a falsehood. “Sammy is a well of truth, but you can't bring the whole of it up in one small bucket.” She stooped down and lightly kissed Christian's forehead.

Instantly a change came over his face, his hands clenched, and he looked at her with wide open but unbeholding eyes. She had never seen any one in the grip of nightmare, and was frightened. He continued to stare before him with an expression of anguish and horror; then he exclaimed in rapid French: “Elle, elle dans cet enfer! j'aime mieux la voir morte, je voudrais mourir moi-même. You will never know; you couldn't know what you have saved me from.”

As she looked at him another change came over his face; he shivered slightly, woke, and looking up at her, said, in his usual voice:

"Are you there, darling? How nice you look! like a lovely white angel, with your hair like that; but it is too cold and lonely, and I have had a horrid time asleep; do stay near me and never, never send me off to the club."

He spoke with a sort of boyish simplicity, quite unconscious of his previous words, and it was with a feeling of strange aloofness from anything approaching his real self, that Oriel tried to read in his frank and untroubled gaze, the mystery which dwelt behind her husband's eyes.

"Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after: a pestilent complete knave; and the woman hath found him already."

CHAPTER VI

THE GUEST OF HONOUR

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THE famous Tuesday evening which was to celebrate the return of Michael Edgar's divorced sister to the small inner circle of his Washington friends duly arrived.

The magnificent butler from Rauscher's, on duty at the Edgars' front door, placed a tiny envelope in Christian's hand. The card within read:

"M. de Troyes will kindly take Mrs. Casenave Edgar in to dinner."

"I am to have the sister-in-law," he remarked to his wife.

"Yes," she answered. "Ida says that she is very charming."

They entered the drawing-room, already half full of well-dressed people. Ida came

forward, leading a tall, slender, diaphanous woman, who seemed to be completely incased in pearly fish scales. Waves of blonde hair and delicately pencilled eyebrows set off a remarkable pair of eyes. Her thin face was beautifully modelled and pale, her exquisitely chiselled lips touched with carmine. Her expression was sad, her voice very dreamy and caressing.

"You know Cassie, I think," said Ida.

"Yes," answered Christian, "we met in France, long ago."

Oriel noticed that the strange woman threw a particularly appealing glance at Troyes as she said: "I'm awfully glad to see you, M. de Troyes, but you are quite mistaken; it is the first time we have met."

"Certainly," said Christian. "I imagined for a moment—" and his wife fancied she heard him add: "Of course, if you wish it."

Although Oriel could not be sure of the words, nothing could have been plainer to any observer than that these two people knew one another perfectly, and that one of them,

at least, did not care to acknowledge their former acquaintance.

The company sat down around a long table, loaded with lights and flowers.

There was no general conversation—the large number precluded such a thing, and besides American fashion favours the habit of a *tête-à-tête*. There arose accordingly from the dining-room a confused buzz of voices, but, as may often be noticed on such occasions, everyone seemed to start talking at once and to cease at the same moment; so that often, in a general lull, the scrappy remnant of a conversation became audible to the whole table, or, at least, to any one particularly interested in the persons speaking.

Oriel was very distrait during dinner, and had great difficulty in making appropriate replies or even listening intelligently to her congressional neighbour. After a well-known habit of the newly married she occasionally sought her husband's eye, but never succeeded in intercepting his glance. Indeed, he seemed quite absorbed in, and attentive to, his fair

neighbour. During one of the sudden drops and pauses, above described, she distinctly heard the words spoken by Mrs. Edgar:

“Ne me trahissez pas—J’ai souffert affreusement, mais je suis maintenant complètement guérie.”

And Christian’s low reply: “Comptez sur ma discrétion—Je vous promets un silence absolu.”

Oriel made an enormous effort not to listen and threw herself feverishly into the political interests of the young Congressman.

Ida, who had been observing the table with the eye of a practised hostess, turned to the guest of honour—a Senator from some Southern State—and resumed her conversation.

“Yes, it is a pity. Of course, with a man of that sort one would be justified, I suppose, partly. He has certainly gone the pace. But, I confess, I never could understand a jealous woman—so stupid and ineffectual! If Troyes loses his head again—as seems quite likely,

men are fools over Cassie—it isn't going to do any good for his wife to hound him about it."

The old Senator shook his head sadly. "It's too bad. I'm sorry for what you tell me. I was always against our girls marrying foreigners, but I really thought this pair was an exception."

Ida opened wide blue eyes. "Oh, dear. Mr. Senator, what have I said? I hope nothing dreadful. You know I'm such an honest fool I can't hold my tongue, especially when I care for my friends. But, of course, there is nothing really serious. I'm very certain there isn't. He's gone the pace, as I said, but, dear me, they all do over there—and, after all, he isn't a circumstance to his mother—she was a case. You mustn't even expect me to tell you much about her—a lovely monster."

"And his father?" inquired the Senator, his curiosity quite piqued.

"I really don't know—though it seems to me that there was something about him, too.

Ask Mike, who is a mine of information. Certainly, if the old Colonel (he was in the army, I think) wasn't pretty naughty himself he must have felt a bit 'out of it' in his family! Do look at the son now! Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, would it? I can't understand some people! How can he be what he is and look as he does, like an impertinent Sir Galahad!"

The Senator smiled; like most of her auditors, he found Ida amusing. She had a way of hitting on an apt comparison which stuck to its victim in a remarkable manner. Her characterization of Christian as an "impertinent Sir Galahad" obtained quite a vogue in her set, where it was bracketed with two other descriptive portraits, "The Dryad with her nose powdered" and "The Nemesis of the Vaudeville," which were both considered as the last word in witty epithets descriptive of certain personalities at the capital.

"I do wish, M. de Troyes, that you would tell me about some nice book; I simply dote

on French," said the pretty little débutante seated on Christian's left.

"*Les Malheurs de Sophie* is generally well spoken of," he replied with apparent seriousness; "also, *Le Petit Bob*, but you will have to be a little older perhaps to understand that."

"Oh, thank you so much; will you just write down those names for me? I wonder if you know anything about a book which I saw today at Brentano's. Mamma wouldn't let me buy it, and I forget the author's name—it's called something Latin, *Confitebor in cithara*. She said that, of course, with that title it couldn't be *jeune fille*."

Christian looked puzzled. "I don't quite follow her reasoning," he remarked.

"Oh, don't you? how funny! Even I can see that—mamma says the words mean *Je vais vous parler de Cythère*, so, of course——"

Christian burst out laughing. "It's better than any of Mrs. Malaprop's," he exclaimed joyfully, and turned to share the joke with his right-hand neighbour.

The débutante was furious. "If you think it is polite to laugh at me in public"—she began indignantly.

"Forgive me; really, I did not intend to be rude," said Christian, apologetically, "but it was funny; you know I couldn't help laughing; the meaning of those particular words is so far removed from the gossip of Venusberg, they are part of our Catholic mass."

The débutante turned for sympathy to Mr. Freshleigh. This gentleman was one of those noble Americans, happily few in number, whose best demonstration of patriotic fervour consists in being rude to those unhappy beings who are not born to the privileges of American citizenship.

Since the departure of the eminent founder of the anti-foreign group he led a small coterie at the Cosmopolitan whose watchword was, "Down with Diplomatic Dagoes." "That is the rudest Frenchman I ever saw," said the débutante.

"He'd better not be rude to you," muttered Mr. Freshleigh, threateningly. "He

knows he has a nose, but not that I shall pull it."

The débutante giggled. "You wouldn't, you know."

"You just wait till I have a chance! I'll do that or something he'll like less."

And Christian, had he kept count, might have added two more to his rapidly growing list of enemies. He was, however, quite unconscious of any inimical feeling, as he continued to "poke fun" at the pair on his left. He had a strong enough affection for the country of his sojourn to feel that he might criticize some points therein without real malice—a mistake which many have made before Christian, and doubtless will continue to make, after his time. "You Americans," he said, "have become the most conventional people in the world—and the most illiberal; you are always legislating now on what is not your business—even the length of sheets, as I saw in this morning's paper. If you don't like cigarettes you must at once prevent me from smoking. As your American husbands can't

prevent their wives individually from fastening their waists up the back, a synod of suffering men get together and pass a law preventing all women from cutting their gowns that way. You can't conceive of an adventuress without a cigarette in her mouth; nor a thoroughly worthy hard-working woman with one, though such, I believe, exist. As for illicit love you always expect a certain *mise en scène*—there has to be a chorus girl and a magnum of champagne for even college boys to think that they are having a good time! You are far more conventional than we are. In France one may still keep some individuality, indulge some fantasy, even in a love affair."

Mrs. Pendragon was addressing the Senator. She spoke low, so that Christian would not hear, but she was an old lady whose word carried weight in Washington society, and several couples in her vicinity paused to listen.

"I have made it my invariable rule in life," she said, "never to appropriate anything not especially designed for me. Yesterday one

of these diplomats,—I will not mention his name, besides it's not necessary,—who has the bad taste to make love to one of our young married women, had the assurance to leave his electric before my door in order that the public, who know his car, would think he was dining with me instead of this fair charmer. I had no hesitation. I summoned my second man. 'James,' I said, 'call your assistant and wheel Baron Thyka's runabout from before my door; place it in front of Mrs. Poland's, where it belongs.' To everybody his due, say I."

"You are perfectly right," responded Mrs. Carter. "These diplomats destroy altogether too many reputations; one can never feel safe. I shall give orders that my servants may do just as yours did, Mrs. Pendragon, should the occasion arise."

"Yes, the Mexican situation looks bad," remarked Oriel's young Congressman. "They tell me most of the military attachés are getting ready to go down. Of course Madero

ought to shoot the whole caboodle that are making the racket—that's the only way to get along with Greasers."

And the dinner finished amidst a confused buzz of chatter. Catching Ida's commanding signal Mike arose and led Mrs. Pendragon to the drawing-room.

While passing the coffee after dinner, a servant approached the host and spoke a few words in his ear. Mike immediately set down his cup, and slipped out of the room. Near the front door stood his sister; she had thrown on her wraps and was trembling violently.

"Oh, Michael, it is he—Troyes! What shall I do? I am slipping back already. I was feeling so safe—so secure where nobody knows, but now what is to become of me?"

"Cassie," said Edgar, looking at his sister with affectionate solicitude, "I understand that this encounter is dreadful for you, but you must control yourself, little girl, you two—both living in Washington—had to meet sometime—much better to have it over."

"Oh, but Mike, if he tells."

Michael paused a moment. "Would you be more easy, Sis, if I talked to him, man to man?—he seems to me to have some sense of honour——"

"Oh, no, Mike, not that, I couldn't bear it."

Michael took both her hands and bent over her. "Sis," he said, "remember I count upon you, and I shall not refer to these things again. Be strong, and remember that I am always there to help you! As for Troyes's speaking—you needn't be frightened. He wouldn't on his own account wish it known. Besides, I have been observing him carefully, and I feel very well assured that even his wife knows nothing about that portion of his life. I am certain that you can count on him to keep silent. . . . And now, dear, go home to bed. I will be around after Ida's people have left. I shall bring a book, so keep someone up to let me in. I intend to sit beside you, and read until you go to sleep, and I have something very amusing that you will enjoy hearing. Be a good little girl, Cassie!"

Her eyes filled with tears. "Mike," she said, "no one ever had such a brother. I don't know why you stick to me through thick and thin like this. I am not worth it, my dear, and I'm sure it makes Ida jealous! You ought just to let me go back to the mire. I'm like the poor old darky, Mike, 'Not worth saving.'"

But her brother seemed not to be of this opinion.

“Work on,
My medicine, work! Thus credulous
fools are caught;
And many worthy and chaste
dames even thus,
All guiltless, meet reproach. . . .
So will I turn her virtue into
pitch;
And out of her own goodness
make the net
That shall enmesh them all.”

CHAPTER VII

WHISPERING TONGUES

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NO sooner had the men gone to smoke and the ladies separated into animated groups than Ida crossed the parlour and sat down next to Oriel.

"Why didn't you tell me, you secretive thing, that your husband and Cassie were old pals? There they were, billing and cooing, over their happy days at Montreux till it made me quite sick. It looks like another scandal in the corps, my dear. You'd better be careful."

Oriel, whose brain was seething, managed to respond with the laugh which was expected and a light reply, but she showed such signs of mental distress that Mrs. Wilmcote, who had been observing her, came over and said with

kindly tact: "My dear, I'm not feeling quite well. If Ida will excuse us I shall ask you to drive home with me. I don't like to stay alone when I have these bad turns. You can come straight back afterward." Oriel caught eagerly at this plank of salvation, and in a few moments they were driving round the speedway.

The park was very solitary. As they approached the river bank only an occasional "electric," silent, black, and mysterious as the gondolas of Venice, stole from under the shadowy willows and glided away, to be swallowed up in the night.

Beyond the low banks the dark waters of the Potomac stretched away in broad, flat lines to the slopes of Arlington, with its crown of dead. Save for the twinkling lights of the railway bridge, the far river and the Virginian hills were swathed in black.

But the tidal basin on the Maryland side mirrored the thousand lights of the city, whose starry points of lamp or gas jet formed a luminous background against which the pale

block of the Executive Mansion glimmered white through the nocturnal shadows.

On the left the unextinguished windows of a government office gleamed a strange metallic green phosphorescent, as the eyes of a panther. Suddenly, to the right, the moving beam of a searchlight touched the Washington monument; the slender tip of the obelisk, baseless as a dream, shone for a moment pure silver, like a fairy fabric high against the night sky. The ray passed, touched the flag on the White House, rested an instant on the dome of the Capitol—then melted away, and was lost in the darkness of the horizon.

Mrs. Wilmcote began to speak quietly in her deep, even voice: "Absurd, how we all want to confide our little tale," she said. "But you know old people are garrulous. I am getting old very fast, and though I never wanted much, to say, like the man in *Punch*, 'More, more about myself,' I should like to talk to you now, my dear, and about myself. Some centuries ago, more or less, it may inter-

est you to know that I was very much in love with Christian's father."

Oriel started. "In fact, I may say that we loved one another, but there were too many things against us—religion, money, or the lack of it, his solemn betrothal, my own engagement. Those were sentimental days, and when we parted we promised undying affection and all that sort of thing, and mutual help in time of trouble. Strangely enough the opportunity came, years after. He married, and had at least Christian. I married and had nothing—nothing real I mean—though I wasn't actively miserable, for my husband and I were old friends, and we had much in common, but it wasn't the right thing, in spite of what fools may tell you. Not what your marriage could be, my child, and what I want to have it. You think me intrusive—please don't. I was able once to give help and comfort to Christian and his father, in terrible, racking, humiliating trouble. He will tell you about it some day, I fancy. It is too horrible a story for your young ears. The conclusion

—where was I? My dear child, I would do anything in the world to help Christian, or you, to be happy.”

Oriel was by nature very reserved, but she was deeply touched, and, with a feeling of inexpressible relief, she found the unshed tears which had been stinging and burning her eyes now falling slowly and soothingly, while her pride seemed to melt, as she spoke, simply and sincerely, to understanding ears.

“We are in trouble, Mrs. Wilmcote, and I know that you would, and will, help me. I don’t understand it—I don’t understand myself or Christian. There is no definite trouble, exactly, nothing but an unfathomable misunderstanding between Christian and me. We were so happy at first, but now we are further apart every day. I have humbled myself, I have tried to explain—it only makes things worse—our happiness is spoiled. I don’t see how I can stand it. It seems as if nothing would ever be right in my world again.”

Mrs. Wilmcote knitted her brows. “There

should be no real misunderstandings between you two," she said, "unless someone is making them for you. I cannot think that you are inventing troubles. There's only one thing I might say to you, my child: It is not explanations, nor humbling of your pride, which can help to clear away misunderstandings. The things which can help are confidence and trust—an act of faith, in short. You are questioning yourself—and questioning him. I know your husband very well—better than you perhaps. You will only hurt yourself and offend him. Happiness in love is like the Kingdom of Heaven. Unless you have the faith of a little child you cannot enter into it. I don't like to preach, yet, my dear, if you could pray a little more, and think a little less, it would be better for both of you."

"Yes, I am sure it would. You are quite right. I do analyse myself and him too much. I will really try and do as you say." Then she added the familiar phrase of babyhood: "I am going to be good now—you have helped so much! Even to speak of it is a relief. You

know I have no one to whom I can say a word. Thank you for making me see my mistake. I had no idea, and I am so glad, that Christian has such a friend as you. How came it that you were enough together for you to be able to know him so well?"

She felt relieved, quieted, at peace; but Mrs. Wilmcote's answer dropped on her mood like a cold stone, crushing her new-found confidence.

"I suppose he cannot talk about those awful days just yet—indeed, such depths should not be spoken of; it would only be painful for him, and could do you no good—take my word for it. We passed almost two years in a horrible place—in a sort of hell on earth—at Montreux."

In the smoking-room, as soon as they were settled, Mr. Freshleigh accosted Troyes. He wagged his head and his manner was offensive. "I suppose you must miss 'Gay Paree,' Troyes? No soubrettes and grisettes over here! Mademoiselle d'Argentans is coming next

week, though. Perhaps she'll make you feel at home."

Christian looked at Freshleigh as if he were a worm and addressed the company; "Our Paris, where a workman has for ten hours' hard work three francs a day,—and consequently no time to love his own wife, much less other people's,—is so completely different from what you Americans see and come to see that I never discuss it."

"Oh, don't you; and what do you do then in your Paris, pray?"

"I have spent most of my time—spare time—in the women's hospitals and prisons," said Christian quite unexpectedly, "not because I wanted to, but because I had to. A relative of mine thought it did young men good."

"I certainly have seen so much of where the world you call 'Gay Paree' comes from—and where it goes back to—that I confess it has few charms for me. I have, though, gone to balls occasionally. I remember, for instance, a few years ago the 'Quatz Arts,' where I had the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Freshleigh,

becomingly clad in a simple leopard skin and crowned with vine leaves. Your companion had vine leaves, too, I think, but I don't remember any fig-leaf apron!"

"And what was Your Virtue doing there, might I ask?" inquired Mr. Freshleigh, furious.

Christian laughed. "Oh, I went with some students who were in my regiment to see you. Americans disport yourselves."

"And did you ever go to the Grande Roue, I wonder?" continued Mr. Freshleigh, anxious to "get back at the dago," as he would have termed it. "Ever fight a duel with one of your toy soldiers and get your epidermis pierced, and then kiss and make friends?—That is the way it's done, I understand."

"Why, no," answered Troyes, slowly. "I haven't happened to be principal in a duel with swords yet—only second—but if the subject interests you I should be charmed to give you a lesson at any time, and on any day, that you can come out with me to Rock Creek."

"We don't use your silly little skewers over here," said Mr. Freshleigh, proudly. "When

a puppy needs a beating we give it to him with fists or with a whip."

"Either of which would suit me perfectly," remarked Christian, airily, as he turned his back with entire deliberation on his interlocutor.

The Senator, who had followed the dialogue with much interest, came forward and spoke to Christian, while Mr. Freshleigh, rather ostentatiously, threw down his cigar and joined the ladies.

"It did me good to see you squelch that puppy," he said. "There isn't a more offensive ass in Washington than that fellow! I hope that I may be present if you ever require to chastise him."

The Senator liked spirit. He was from the South—as has been said—and apparently he liked Christian, too, for he drew up a chair and sat beside him. The young Congressman joined them. "Horrid situation in Mexico," he began. "They tell me the military attachés have all gone down. Hope Madero will shoot the whole caboodle. Not the

attachés, of course, but the Greasers. Wish he'd take in the Japs, too; can't bear them for my part. Can't even understand them, drat it all. The queer interjections they strew in their conversation make it sound like hungry hyenas."

"Yes," answered Mr. Slofraat; "but, after all, what a clever little people, I always think."

"Indeed they are," responded the Senator, with alacrity. "Clever, I should think so! You know when Mrs. Pendragon went to Japan they offered her one of their baths in a garden; you know the style? 'I can't take it there,' said she. 'Why, the road goes right by, and people can look over the wall.' What do you think her Japanese landlord said: 'Never mind that, madam; have no fear; only Japanese pass on that road. Now a Japanese he only look once, he no look again.'"

"Well, well," exclaimed Mr. Slofraat, "now if that doesn't prove how small the world is! Why, I heard your same story in Madrid two years ago."

The conversation languished a moment,

then from the other side of the room rose a stentorian voice:

"She led from a queen, twice guarded. Now, what could you expect from dunder-heads like that! Never play bridge with a woman; that's my maxim." This sounded promising, so the Congressman and Mr. Slofraat moved over to listen, leaving Christian and the Senator alone.

These two conversed for an hour on all sorts of subjects, social, political, and even religious. The Senator thought the young man very well informed and interesting, on most of them, and was particularly pleased to find him thoroughly conversant with the history and great names of the South—especially familiar with the life of his own old hero, Lee. "I always admired him immensely for his genius and character," Christian had said, "and lately my wife, and now you, have made me love him."

The Senator seized his hand and shook it warmly. "I've enjoyed our powwow," he exclaimed, "and I can't often say the same to a

man of your age. I am not apt to spend much time talking to youngsters and generally find it wasted when I do. They don't often say anything I particularly care to listen to."

From the opposite corner the voice of the young Congressman made itself audible. He was speaking with much weight:

"Looks mighty bad down in Mexico! Why, they tell me"—The Senator hastily left the smoking-room and joined the ladies, where he found Mrs. Pendragon relating the adventure of the yellow electric to an admiring group.

"I've been talking to a remarkable fellow," said the Senator—"really a very rare combination in our day; you don't often find them together in the same person."

"Find what?" asked Mrs. Slofraat, a pretty woman from New York, not celebrated for being what the Scotch call "glag at the uptak."

"A mind, a heart, and a real old-fashioned soul," replied the Senator, with a twinkle in his eye. "And the queerest part of it is that

he takes it about in society with him, quite naked and unashamed."

"It doesn't surprise me in the least," said the lady from New York. "Disgusting! Ida has just been telling us that the man is a horrid Lothario." And the Senator, who had a great sense of the ridiculous, was so overjoyed with her comment that he left this estimate of Troyes quite uncorrected.

Christian seemed completely different from his usual self that evening. He lay wearily on the sofa upstairs, distant and absorbed, his right arm flung across his eyes. Oriel sat before her dressing table, where she slowly took off and mechanically put away her jewels. Rising and filled with good resolutions she went over and placed her hand gently on her husband's shoulder, saying with a lightness more like her old manner than for many days: "Chris, dear, why are you so grand, gloomy, and peculiar?"

It was not often that Christian de Troyes showed temper, but he was not an angel, and had been under a great strain. He an-

swered with a short laugh. "Am I all that? Then I must be learning American manners!"

"Yes," she answered, determined on an explanation, "our manners, our ideals, everything, are so different that we must come to one definite understanding. There is an essential thing in me which, if we are to be happy, you must comprehend. I believe that I could forgive anything, even actual infidelity, better than lies and deception." It cost her pride a terrible effort to speak. After a moment her husband answered, but his tone was one of light society chit-chat, slightly tinged with irony.

"Cherished angel, the statement, though it may do you honour and certainly flatters me, does not seem of prime importance seeing that you are in no danger, either from lies or deception. I forget your other long word, and, my dear, it would be well for you also to understand one thing, I hate *le mélo*, and, if it is to please my Gallic taste that you have lately adopted the language and manners of a

Sardou heroine I hope very much that you will drop it."

It was the first time Oriel's husband had spoken so scornfully, and after her poor little attempt to arrive at a better understanding, it seemed that a door had been slammed in her face.

Oriel, whom tears exhausted, slept late next morning. On waking she found her husband gone. A note lay on her pillow, hastily scribbled. "Will be golfing all day," it said. "I am sorry to have been such a beast—in fact, we have both been acting like common quarrelsome old concierges. Suppose we behave a little and get back to the 'First Families of Virginia' and 'Noblesse Oblige.'"

Oriel laughed at the note and at once felt better. As she looked out on the radiant morning she began to wonder at herself for her sick fancies.

It was one of the brilliant days which the traveller seeks on the Riviera, and, it may be

said, so seldom finds; but such days often surprise the winter dweller in Washington with an almost magic foretaste of spring. The asphalt pavements glittered wet and smooth under the warm sun. Overhead the sky was blue as Italy, and cut against it, as if made of purest alabaster, the ever-varying monument, like a chameleon reflecting the heavens' moods, shone pure and beautiful. Oriel had often seen this great obelisk outlined against a stormy sky, when it seemed to point an accusing and dramatic finger away from the world's strife to an avenging heaven.

She began to fancy that it responded to some occult influence, and, like the oracles of old, showed happy omens or threatened disaster. Today all was delicious, from the feeling of spring in the air to the tiny crocus which thrust its precocious chalice beside the doorstep.

She felt tranquillized and happy. Donning her prettiest street dress, she walked up Connecticut Avenue and met Christian as he descended from the electric car.

The day before he had almost realized the situation—had nearly decided on the necessity of some sort of explanation with his wife. But seeing her look so pretty and contented he quickly decided that all must be well. “Is it all right again?” he asked laughingly. “Have you stopped hating me yet?”

And she responded in the same vein of half-laughing badinage, just as she might have done some months before her doubts and worries began. She seemed, indeed, so much like her former self that her husband once more felt quite reassured, and again put off the idea of any confidential explanation. He did so all the more readily, that, beyond anything in the world, he hated to talk about disagreeable things.

"Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the
curse of service. . . .
We cannot all be masters, nor
all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd."

CHAPTER VIII

UNOFFICIAL INTERVENTION

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THAT same Wednesday Mrs. Wilmcote wrote another letter.

“I don’t like to bore you again,” “on what is really not my business—especially, since you seem to prefer the wisdom of Emily Jane, to that of a modern Solomon like your humble servant. But I do hate to see pretty things smashed—and seriously, Antoine, after what I am going to tell you, it will be your fault if this thing smashes.

“When I wrote before, I only suspected that some baleful influence was at work against Christian’s happiness, and even reputation. It is no longer a suspicion, but a certainty.

“Venomous malice, individual spite, are doing their utmost. People are beginning to

say nasty things. Who starts them and why? I will tell you when we meet; the 'why' is not important, and 'were reasons as plentiful as blackberries I would give no man a reason upon compulsion,' though, as I am coming very soon, I will explain fully and verbally.

"But don't wait for my coming to act. This is important.

"Get Christian home! You have *boudé* and played the offended relative long enough. Cable your couple, if you care—as you pretend—for your nephew, and also if you really—as you have sometimes pretended—believe in the affectionate interest of your well-wisher, Susan Wilmcote, who, I should hope, knows better what she is talking about than any Emily Jane. This gracious lady, by the way, is sailing with me on the *Provence's* next trip.

"No one thought 'dear Amélie' would linger so long in her native country, but little Bérangère suddenly manifested tastes and feelings, and simply insisted on seeing something of her 'Motherland.'

"I could wish for the child's ideals that it had been at another time.

"I told you that this continent would stop behaving if I absented myself too long—and just look how things are! Topsy-turvy, and I with no time to remould it—Oh, cursed spite!—nearer to the heart's desire.

"When I see what is happening around me, there do come moments when I 'envy the dead that are already dead, more than the living that are yet alive, because they do not see the evil that is done under the sun.' . . . What is wrong with the times?

"Here we have in our midst, the personification of all that is kind, patient, honourable, wise, and magnanimous, one of the 'simple, great ones of old' (*c'est le cas de le dire*), in a blatant land.

"One of whom the great preacher might have written his lines: 'There is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity.'

"Well, it seems we are all mortal, and, although I have been taking certain things in my country pretty hard, on the whole it has been a great pleasure to be at home again.

"The autumn was really delightful. You know that I am inclined to make fun of New England, but I love Boston dearly in spite of my quips, and most of my really warm friends live there, or at least on the 'North Shore.' As you may imagine, even in a small place, there are always different coteries, and naturally an old foggy like me frequented the quietest of these, where one finds the salt of the earth. Not so Emily Jane, who plunged feverishly into the 'smart set,' and it was really funny to see her flounder there; she had a hard time eradicating Bérangère from this festive company. America has transformed the child completely; of course she doesn't know where to draw the line as an American girl would, and the consequence is that the gay youths find her conversation and manners most entertaining. She has become a belle—a sort of 'Elizabeth's visits' girl—but I doubt whether

she would write any letters (to her mother at least) about her doings.

"As for Washington, it has been enchanting, particularly the dinners—clever people, clever conversation, and a constant undertone of political excitement. I have sat next to the most interesting men of all sorts—talked over the most varied matters—never been bored a moment. There are some delightful women, too, and nothing is pleasanter than the kind of lunch where I went today, composed of six women who have seen what is best in this country and know how to talk of their experiences.

"We have had some good music and many delightful musicales. I have gone to some of these at the White House, where it is a favourite form of entertainment. A few are invited to dine before—a quantity come in afterward. The East Room is filled, but not crowded—a beautiful sight. I know nothing more impressive in its dignity, more complete in its way, than the White House *en fête*. It embodies all our best traditions of hospitality and cor-

diality—of perfection without ostentation. Then there is something in the atmosphere which hangs about it during these days of a closing Administration which makes one think of that serenity which seems still to cling around the woods of Mt. Vernon, and which appears there almost like a material reflex from the calm and tempered ripeness of its owner's soul. There is, I imagine, an affinity, a certain likeness in the magnanimity of all generous, wise, and simple men, whether of ancient or modern times. Certainly, since seeing what I have seen of our President I have felt more than ever before that I have been helped to understand the kind of greatness which has been handed down to us as the best American ideal. Alas! too hard for our generation of egotists to follow or even respect. The only ideal which is preached nowadays is 'one's duty to one's self.' Horrible thought! Shall we ever return to saying, '*Non nobis Domini*'?

"I am glad that Christian has had this glimpse of America in 1913. He will always

remember what he has seen in Washington. For he is young and may perhaps build from these experiences some character structure which will stand and count in his own country.

"But we, poor veterans, who 'lag superfluous on the stage,' crumbling and not constructing 'Karma,' too old to hope for any millennium.

"What can such ones do but howl our recession—sprinkle ashes and cry out, 'O Lord of Hosts, be with us yet. Lest we forget, lest we forget.' After all this I should surely sign myself Solomon instead of Susan, but I know that you are old enough, and friend enough, to have learned both patience and charity, even toward an omniscient and proverbial bore."

Mrs. Wilmcote felt relieved when she had dispatched her letter. She knew Christian's uncle well enough to be acquainted with both his qualities and his foibles. The Duke never stayed angry long, and was very amenable to reason. He possessed, however, a great fund

of obstinacy and would continue, almost indefinitely, in the same path, unless some outside influence came to divert his course.

Christian did not seem at all likely to humble his pride and sue for favours; it became therefore manifest to Mrs. Wilmcote that she remained the only person who might make an efficacious appeal to the native kindness and highly developed reason of the Duke.

Mrs. Wilmcote was always happiest when in action. Hers was a nature to face courageously any situation except one which entailed a passive acceptance of conditions that seemed to her essentially wrong. Always deeply interested in French and American politics, keen for *la revanche*, as are many of those who lived through the seige of Paris, she was in her own country an ardent Republican, throwing into the polemics of 1912 her whole heart. When the famous party of Lincoln was sundered in Chicago she felt that she had suffered a deep and personal loss.

Honour and friendship, these were her old-

fashioned watchwords, unselfish and unchanging, generous, charitable, zealous, and devoted, she had never been heard to mention "altruism," and the prevalence of this word joined to the term "eugenics" in the daily press confirmed her in the opinion that much was wrong with the times.

By nature resilient she reacted very speedily from a mood of depression when she found herself among congenial surroundings. She already felt pleased with her afternoon's work and began to dress for that evening's dinner with agreeable expectancy. She was invited to the house of a witty and brilliant Cabinet Minister, whose mental scintillations delighted society as much as his cleverness enlivened the dryness of a legal debate. His wife, too, was equally agreeable. They were reputed the best hosts in Washington. So, her duty accomplished, it was with a feeling of profound satisfaction that Mrs. Wilmcote prepared to enjoy herself thoroughly.

All went well. She was seated at dinner next to a certain celebrated physician—the

famous Dr. Leblanc, one of the great lights of medical science, who was making a tour of inspection in American hospitals. Besides his professional attainments the physician ranked as a brilliant and delightful exponent of art, in the best French conversation. There was a constant cross-fire of wit between Dr. Leblanc and his host, punctuated, as it were, by the occasional caustic intervention of a Supreme Justice—everybody was in good humour and splendid form.

As she drove home after the long and delightful evening, spent in what she felt to be her very element, Mrs. Wilmcote again became buoyantly optimistic. Why had she been croaking like a depressing old raven amid all the varied charms which surrounded her? Why did she waste time grumbling in what was surely the most sparkling and brilliant capital among all those of this particularly entrancing world?

" A housewife that by selling her
desires
Buys herself bread and clothes: it is
a creature
That dotes on Cassio; as 'tis the
strumpet's plague
To beguile many and be beguiled
by one."

CHAPTER IX

"CHASE'S POLITE VAUDEVILLE"

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"CHASE'S POLITE VAUDEVILLE"

"CHRISTIAN," said Oriel, about ten days later, "did you ever hear of the dancer whom we are going to see at Chase's tonight?—her name is Mlle. Blanche d'Argentan: they say that she is very celebrated."

"Not enough for me," answered Christian, carelessly. "I never heard her silly name before the seductive Freshleigh spoke of her. Does she dance, or just undress?"

"I don't know, but this is what the *Journal* says," and Oriel read from the morning's paper: "After a sensational engagement in New York, during which the censor had much to say, we are, at last, to have in Washington the great treat of beholding the celebrated star, whose dancing was the craze of London and Paris last season. We are assured by

competent authorities that, although Miss d'Argentan has thought best, in order to avoid similar trouble with the authorities of our city, to modify her toilets, the artistic beauty of her performance will be nowise impaired. She intends to wear, for the first time this evening, her splendid emeralds, the souvenir of one of Europe's crowned heads. A King's ransom would scarcely purchase the total amount of the regal jewelry which adorns the dancer. The value of these superb gems might, it is said, foot up into the five figures, and represent gifts from the noblest families on the continent. She is accompanied on her tour by two detectives and one of the best wrestler-boxers of France, who, during the performance, is never far from Miss d'Argentan's dressing-room.' "

"All of which," said Christian, laughing, "might be classed as highly important, if true! Are we obliged to assist at this spectacle?"

"Oh, I think so. The Seymours have a box, and look upon it as a great treat which they are offering us. Besides, I am quite curious to go; I have never seen anything of this sort."

“No,” remarked Christian, dryly. “I should be inclined to hope not. To change the subject, what have we on hand tomorrow? A dinner at Chevy-Chase, I think.”

“No, that is the day after; tomorrow we dine at the British Embassy.”

“It will be D. V. for me, I fear,” said Christian. “I feel this morning as if I were going to join the great army of the gripped.”

“Oh, Christian, do you feel very bad?” cried Oriel. “Let me take your temperature! You’d much better stay in today, then, and look after yourself.”

But this view of the situation did not please Christian.

“Thank you, I prefer my feet while they hold. I’ll go to bed when I have to. But, if you like, I will stay in this afternoon, perhaps. I have nothing particular to do, and you might get through some calls. You’ve a quantity on your list, and it’s N Street day, where you haven’t been for ever so long.”

“Very well. Ida asked me to make some with her, so if you want me to I will.”

She acceded sweetly, hoping that her alacrity would bring a reprieve. For Oriel was slowly learning that Christian was particularly set on social duties, when she rebelled against them.

However, her first essay in diplomacy of this sort was not successful. Her husband was entirely determined that on this particular Tuesday N Street calls must be made. At 3.30 accordingly she found herself rolling up Sixteenth Street in the well-appointed coupé which Ida Edgar always seemed to find at her disposal. At 5.30 their list of "important" visits was completed, and Oriel was impatient to return home. Her companion, however, was equally determined to push on farther—she must stop at her sister-in-law's. "I have to leave a message for Cassie," she said, "and I must go there, if only for a moment; you ought to come, too! You know you have dined with her, and I'm sure you haven't called." It seemed absurd for Oriel violently to oppose so small a matter; therefore, in spite of an instinctive aversion, she consented to accompany Ida.

They stood some time under the Colonial entrance before the bell was answered and the door was half-opened by an embarrassed servant. "No, ma'am, not receiving."

A murmur of voices was distinctly audible. Ida said curtly, "Please let me inside; I have to write a line to my sister-in-law. Is there a pencil?" and stepped within the door, while Oriel, embarrassed, stood half in and half outside the threshold. The parlour door opened directly, through heavily-draped curtains, from the little vestibule in which they stood. This entrance hall contained a mahogany stand on which was a man's cane, a Chinese bowl half-full of visiting cards, a block, with its pencil, which Ida was now busily wielding, and Christian's overcoat.

Oriel again felt that cold, sick sensation which she had already several times experienced. Then she determined with all her will to thrust her doubts away. She forced her mind to reason that it was perfectly natural for her husband to call on Mrs. Edgar. The servant was evidently a "green hand," and

doubtless had made a mistake in saying that her mistress was not receiving. She glanced at Ida, still busily writing, while from the back of the next room Christian's voice was distinctly audible.

"Why send for me to ask that, and at the same time pretend that it's all over? You know that it is quite impossible for me to use my place in the Embassy as you wish. God knows that I would do anything on earth to help you, but that is not the way. You must have courage and help yourself."

"Oh, don't you begin to prate like Mike," cried Cassie. "It's easy enough for you to talk about courage to such as I am. You've never been cast off, shamed, scorned, and then asked to be self-respecting."

Oriel turned hastily and entered the carriage. She felt horribly ill. A strange burden and pressure squeezed her heart. Ida flounced into the coupé. "Cassie must be having either a bridge or a lover," she remarked. "I told you that my sister-in-law was quite a bird!

But I confess I don’t like being turned out of the house like that.”

It seemed to Oriel that the short distance between N Street and her little house would never be traversed. She was conscious of an incessant stream of talk on the part of Ida, but as to what she said, that remained quite hazy and undefined in both memory and consciousness. Her brain seemed dull. She wished very much that Ida would stop talking—that was all. She had no recollection of how they parted at the door, but found herself sitting, quite stunned and stupefied, in the empty drawing-room while time slowly crawled by. When the hideous clock struck seven it seemed to rouse her suddenly from the state of apathy into which she had fallen, and she began to think and to suffer more definitely, more acutely than she would have believed possible.

Oriel’s chief quality, as it was sometimes her greatest defect, was pride. Her pride had lifted her above the sordid surroundings of poverty and made her superior to the small

worries and humiliations which many girls feel when they find themselves in an inferior position among people less educated, less mentally and spiritually endowed. This calm superiority to petty slights helped her to deal with those whose lack of manners rendered such a situation as the one she had occupied on Long Island almost untenable. She had always been able to rise above incivility or insult, armed with the knowledge that such things were beneath contempt or resentment, and had gone very placidly about her business when many girls of her age would have been "making scenes" or handing in resignations.

Now, for the first time in her life, she felt bowed to the ground, weighed down, with a sense of complete humiliation.

To what depths had she descended?

Into what alien world had fancy, imagination, illusion led her? What dreams, dreamed against her better judgment, had brought her to this awakening? There is but one medicine for hurt pride, and that medicine is anger. To rebel violently against another,

to hate someone else enough to stop hating and despising one’s self.

Of such vicarious relief Oriel was incapable. She was too proud to hate or blame any one but herself—supreme fool and dupe that she was! But for her to be brought to this pass, the clear-headed and independent girl, who had battled successfully in the market-place, had honourably and decently maintained herself by the work of brain and hand, to be the dupe of silly sentiment; she scorned herself now far more than she despised her husband’s treachery. Had she not often been warned against just such as he?

And this being so, what remained for her to do? Since these things were, how could she ever reconcile herself to herself? How continue to go the weary, worldly round which lay before her, unenlightened by faith’s candle or hope’s star—unsolaced even by that cold and miserable comfort, “self-respect”?

She had no anger against her husband, only a feeling of weariness and despair. If her confused thoughts had taken shape, she might

have expressed them something in this manner:

“I have been a complete, pitiful fool; worse, I have behaved like the type of woman whom I have, by tradition and taste, scorned the most. I have allowed myself to be led against the better judgment of my reason to follow the dictates of instinct and passion; to be passively bound to the chariot of a *jeune homme à succès*. I have given my love and faith to a man incapable, either by temperament or training, of understanding what such a surrender as mine means to me. It is not his fault—he is irresponsible; immoral without thought or scruple, without premeditation, or remorse; he is no better than a charming, quite conscienceless liar; yet, now that I know it, after this awakening, I must go on living with him and trying to appear the same in the outside world. But do I know it? Can there remain the slightest possible doubt as to what manner of man Christian is? Then duty demands that he should be given the benefit of such doubt. I may not act or speak hastily—there will be time afterward to

think what can be done—whether it will be possible to make the series of compromises which my life with him must necessarily become knowing that he has ceased to love me (if he ever did have anything more than a passing fancy in my direction)."

At this point Oriel's heart rebelled against her reason. Surely, surely Christian had loved her! There could not be such complete hypocrisy on his part as in her sudden disillusion there seemed! Perhaps some unseen influence stretched out from his mysterious past, and claimed him against his will, and, although this solution left her in the grip of a retrospective jealousy it was a lesser evil than to think of another woman's power over him as being exercised in the present. At any rate, one duty was paramount—she must wait, calm her despair, exercise self-control.

The clock struck half-past seven. The front door opened. Christian entered and ran upstairs calling her.

Her heart responded, as it always did, to the sound of his voice. But she sat perfectly still

under the flickering gas jet. Her will, not her instinct, should be master now.

Christian came downstairs and found her sitting like Fate in the half-darkened parlour.

He said a quick word, made a hasty gesture of impatience. "Heavens, Oriel, is it possible that you don't know the hour? Why, it's almost eight! I was kept late over a rubber, at the club, but you could have gone on dressing!" He turned up the light, looked at her, and shrugged his shoulders. "Dear child," he said, "please behave! We really have not time to go through the *femme incomprise* act. If you must do it wait until we get home! I will promise to give you a nice little melodrama at eleven! You shall be Sarah, Duse, and Nazimova, and I will be the 'Unspeakable Brute'! Come along and dress!"

Too weary for words, incapable of conflict, Oriel arose and followed her husband upstairs.

At the Seymours' they found four other guests awaiting them with great impatience, while the hostess herself was at the

telephone inquiring the reason of their non-arrival. Mr. Seymour was busily shaking cocktails. The Mike Edgars were there, with a vivacious young lady from Boston and Mr. Freshleigh. These six, with the Troyes, made up the box party. They sat down at once to dinner, grumbling over the fifteen minutes' delay. "It never would do to be late at such a performance," they said. The dancer was scheduled to appear at 9.35, and as she was what Mr. Seymour called "a corker" they could not afford to lose part of her "entertainment." Everyone seemed particularly versed in Miss d'Argentan's career among the aristocracy of Europe; they told stories which made Oriel's hair stand on end. Perhaps owing to a double round of cocktails, indulged in to "pass time" while awaiting the Troyes' arrival, Mr. Freshleigh, instead of his usual growling hostility towards Christian, manifested a boisterous and jovial familiarity.

They dined hastily and merrily. Soon they were packed into two taxicabs and eventually seated in the pretty theatre whose

"vaudeville entertainment" is curiously characterized as "polite." Mr. Seymour, who was a kindly soul, profited by a moment's isolation with Ida to inquire: "What on earth's the matter with Mme. de Troyes? She looks like a ghost, and has hardly opened her mouth."

"Oh, that's nothing," replied Ida, "she's just sick with jealousy—poor fool—that's the trouble with handsome husbands. Now with Mike one doesn't have to worry."

Almost everyone they knew was in the theatre. "Mrs. Cassie Edgar" was seated with the Thayers in an adjoining box. Mr. Freshleigh again became jocular. "It takes you Frenchmen to 'pick the winner' every time," he said. "We all noticed you the other night—not that I blame you, old boy—prettiest woman in Washington, except present company, of course."

They were not late. Mlle. d'Argentan had not yet appeared and for almost half an hour they enjoyed such pleasure as may be afforded by the contemplation of trained cats, and two tramps, who juggled with cigar stumps.

Then the curtains opened on a cellar at Montmartre and, amid a lifelike representation of a band of Parisian apaches, the celebrated dancer, assisted by Ton-Ton Le Trapu, gave her “well-known creation, La Valse Montmartoise.” Her partner was an evil-looking brute, with a patch over one eye. He wore a flannel shirt, and trousers with broad red waistband, through which was thrust a long butcher’s knife.

One could scarcely have expected from his massive build such supple and graceful movements, though the cat-like ferocity which he displayed was thoroughly in character.

He tossed the dancer about as if she had been a rag. At one moment she was on his shoulder, the next, trampled under foot. It seemed that her tiny waist must snap in the wild whirl and violence of his performance. Her black hair partly covered the rents in her corsage; her scanty skirt was torn to fringes; in short, the spectacle lacked nothing in brutality and realism. It was sufficiently disgusting to astonish even the most jaded

spectator who had come in quest of sensation. But it was hardly a success. What the audience sought was something "very Frenchy"; they had scarcely counted on being taken quite to such depths of the Parisian slum and felt almost relieved when the heavy plush folds rustled together.

Then followed an interlude of strange barbaric, indecent music. The curtains again parted. The stage was hung with black satin, carpeted with sable velvet—nothing relieved the sombreness save the dancer's monogram worked in brilliants in the centre of the stage, B. D., surmounted by a ducal crown. In a flash she had burst through the hangings; a blaze of light from thousands of facets sent forth luminous rays of rainbow tints. On her head she wore a casque of diamonds, the sacred Ibis of the Nile, with drooped wings. Her breast and arms also glittered with jewels. A necklace and pendant of immense emeralds hung nearly to her waist. A chain of diamonds about her hips precariously supported a few folds of yellow chiffon, heavy with pearl

embroidery at the hem. Her bare ankles were encircled with diamond-studded bands, furnished with tiny crystal bells, which tinkled faintly as she moved. Two immense solitaires blazed on toe rings. She began to sway to the rhythm of the flutes and tamtams, looping about her arms and waist an immense drugged and unresisting snake, hooded, cobra-wise, with a cowl of diamonds.

Oriel, after a movement of disgust, sought the eye of her husband. He was standing at the back of the box. She seemed to be looking on a stranger. Christian’s face was transformed. A queer, ferocious light was in his eyes. His nostrils dilated; his teeth showed through parted lips. Just as she turned he exclaimed: “Who has the strongest lorgnon?” and Mr. Freshleigh slipped a pair of black businesslike opera-glasses in his hand, remarking, with a chuckle: “By Jove, we’d all like to, but I haven’t quite the face—before ladies!”

Christian did not hear; he was absorbed in gazing before him. When he had entirely

finished he returned the glass without a word and left the box. Ida exchanged a rapid glance of intelligence with Freshleigh, who, after a moment's pause, slipped out after him.

The hulking brute who had executed the "apache waltz" stood at the stage door. "No one see the divette without proper introduction," he said, with a coarse leer.

Christian thrust him aside, merely remarking in French: "*Bonsoir*, Ton Ton! You didn't expect me here, did you? But Mlle. Blanche will hardly refuse to see so old a friend!"

The "apache" gave place; his face had turned a sickly greenish tinge, and he crumpled up as if he had received a knockout blow. Mr. Freshleigh, profiting by the guardian's discomfiture, pushed into the narrow corridor, crying, "Next," and followed Christian, who slammed the door of the dancer's dressing-room in his face.

His entrance was immediately followed by the noise of breaking furniture, a scream, and such a torrent of vile language, in shrill French, as quite staggered the listener.

Christian's low voice was lost in the stream of vituperation. The eavesdropper could only make out the words, "Ramasse donc! Sale aristo! Ah, si ce cochon de Ton-Ton, vous avait cassé la gueule."

The door reopened. Christian, his cheek slightly cut, emerged, placing a square package in his pocket. On the threshold he turned, uttering some rapid words in French, whose meaning Freshleigh made out to be:

"Just six hours to leave with your precious Ton-Ton." Then the door banged, and Christian, pushing his way through the narrow corridor, disappeared into the street.

When he regained the box Ida greeted him with a smile. "Mrs. Chris was quite disgusted," she said. "You'll have to accustom her gradually to your naughty French ways. She told Mrs. Seymour she wasn't well, but I'm sure she was just shocked by the d'Argentan. At any rate, Mike took her home, and will join us at supper. We're going round to the 'Extenuating Circumstance Club,' you know, for oysters and things."

Christian demurred. "If his wife felt ill he would better go home, too."

His hostess intervened: "You can't really, Mr. de Troyes; we need you for a rubber, and your wife knows it; besides, she said that she was very tired and would go right to sleep. She left word for you to come on with us to the club."

The "Extenuating Circumstance Club" was a characteristic landmark of Washington; the membership was strictly limited; no foreigners, no outsiders, a little nucleus of "Old Washingtonians" and such political personages as had been rendered almost "Washingtonian" by long residence. The club was a sort of Liberty Hall. A plain deal table, with a pan in the middle for the roast oyster shells, mugs, and trenchers; the furniture of a primitive British inn or Heidelberg beer cellar, formed its chief attraction.

The walls were hung with coloured prints and caricatures. An established tradition claimed that it was a little "fast" to go to the "Extenuating Circumstance Club," and it was

said (by tradition also) to be enormously amusing.

On this particular evening, however, something was wrong; everyone seemed uncomfortable. They appeared as if waiting for Christian to go home before saying something which was in their minds. Michael Edgar’s countenance was lowering; Mr. Freshleigh made himself churlish and disagreeable; the game dragged. Christian took advantage of the first opportunity to leave, but it was nevertheless almost two o’clock when he let himself into the little house in I Street. He went upstairs. His wife was, or at least appeared to be, sleeping soundly.

"Here is my journey's end, here is my butt
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail. . . .
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it."

CHAPTER X

"ADAGIO LAMENTOSO"

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CHRISTIAN woke next morning, as he had prophesied the day before, with aching bones, scraped throat, and a mounting temperature. At noon he asked his wife to telephone to the Embassy where they were invited, and give their excuses for the evening's dinner, holding herself in readiness, as is the custom in such circumstances, to fill a vacant place should another occur. Very weary, after the almost sleepless nights she had spent lately—Oriel was quite relieved when a message came back from the Embassy in question—the number was even—she would not be needed to make the symmetrical table.

They had little conversation—Christian's throat was too sore to talk. Oriel read him

the paper and he dropped off to sleep. At about four o'clock he called her. "You're looking worse than I do," he said. "You must go out and get a little air, then we'll have a nice little supper and sleep early."

As Oriel wandered aimlessly about in the pursuit of air—her sick mind was still slowly grinding the same thought to powder—reconstructing the premises and grinding again. Hardly conscious of what direction she was taking, Oriel boarded a U Street car, but on reaching the terminus it suddenly flashed across her brain that there had been some motive in her action—an unformulated desire to look again on what had once struck her as being the absolute embodiment of Rossetti's line, "Life's iron heart, even love's fatality," set forth eternally in the calm and serene beauty of bronze and marble. She bent her steps toward the peaceful cemetery of Rock Creek and entered the gate. She wandered about a little before finding what she sought, for the masterpiece of St.-Gaudens expresses such a morbid and hopeless grief that it was

thought by many shocking to religious sentiment, and is hidden from the view of the casual passer-by.

Oriel pushed aside the closely woven branches of a yew hedge and entered the crescent-shaped space.

Before her was a semicircular bench of stone against a background of cypresses. On it was seated a hooded bronze figure, chin in hand. Oriel remained in fascinated contemplation of the tragic mystery which this figure personified. The face which gazed out beneath the heavy draperies was an enigma; under the rigid folds even the sex was left in doubt. She was confronting, not man or woman, but the concentrated essence and symbol of despair—the pain of a whole world—an agony so intense that mere excess of suffering had dulled sensation, frozen tears. It was a dead face which gazed at her, rigid and immutable in its tragic calm.

Oriel had been told the story of her whom this monument commemorates, and suddenly the meaning of the veiled figure was revealed

to her. Here was the portrait and embodiment of an aching mind and tortured soul, whom the burden of a world's sorrow had driven to seek this tragic peace.

There suddenly sounded in her ears the rhythm of phantom drum taps, or was it only the pulsing of her blood?

She seemed to hear the orchestral wail of that Tschaikowsky symphony which in unbelievable crescendo scales the heights of human despair till it reaches that climax of agony beyond which lies the calm silence of Nirvana—where hope is left behind, and the soul asks only rest.

The girl's face as she left the cemetery wore an expression much like the frozen look of the bronze. She had understood that beyond the anguish of a finite heart, beyond the light of faith's candle or hope's star, flow the dark, still waters of Lethe—the shadowy pathway to oblivion, and with this thought came a lull and respite to the grinding pain of her fixed idea.

Suddenly she took a resolution. Remem-

bering that the best way to conquer a phantom is to face it, she decided to go and see Mrs. Edgar. Surely it would be better to talk with her than to remain thus encircled and haunted by her personality; besides there was something to find out. She felt better the moment the decision was taken, and it was with a more elastic step that she turned into N Street and rang at the low doorway.

The same “green” parlour-maid answered hesitatingly she “didn’t know, thought her mistress was lying down,” but “would ask,” and, returning, led the way to a shaded back room where Mrs. Edgar was reclining on a sofa, a cigarette between her fingers, and the poems of Mme. de Noailles on her knees. On a Turkish coffee table beside her was a beautifully enamelled cigarette case, with the initials of her name, curiously interwoven in the design.

She greeted Oriel most kindly—her manner was gentle, sympathetic, pathetic. Her eyes, very peculiar, with a look about the iris which seemed different from any Oriel had ever

seen—these eyes compelled attention and demanded pity. Oriel, very sensitive to charm, felt the hatred she had been nursing against this woman melting away into curiosity and a strange sort of sympathy.

There was a clinging mystery about Mrs. Edgar, a subtle demand for help and comprehension. She spoke quite without affectation of her tastes. She missed France, she said. She had been there so long that everything seemed beautiful to her—not Paris, of course, but the country—the mountains, the literature, poetry especially. Had Oriel read *Le Visage Emerveille*? “You ought to,” she remarked. “I am sure you would like it; the æsthetic mysticism would please you, I think. You know, Mme. de Troyes, you are the only poetic thing in Washington. I suppose I shouldn’t say so, but I can’t comprehend how you see so much of my sister-in-law. Ida cares only for the nasty facts of life. You look, at least, as if you had known beautiful dreams. Shall I read you one of these?”

And taking up her book she read with true

artistic intuition a few stanzas; the beautiful words, the exquisite images, the caressing voice soothed Oriel's jangled nerves inexpressibly. Mrs. Edgar continued: "After a loathsome exhibition like last night's I like to return to religion and symbolism. You should not have gone there, Mme. de Troyes; you're too young; indeed, you always will be too young for such a performance. Your husband shouldn't let you—he can't like to see you at that sort of exhibition."

Oriel suddenly faced the phantom. "Do you know my husband?" she said.

A sudden recovery, a sudden guarded look in the strange eyes, and Mrs. Edgar answered, "Oh, no, never before now; I should like too, though. He will be at the British Embassy tonight, I suppose. I shall tell him never to take you to such a place again."

Oriel answered slowly, "No, he is not going tonight, he has just given out."

"I am sorry, I had hoped to see him there; there are so few people one meets and likes the first time."

Oriel, watching the wafts of smoke circle into the air, suddenly felt an unusual longing. "Mrs. Edgar," she said, "I have been feeling all jangled and upset today. I am going to take one of your cigarettes, if I may; I think it will soothe my nerves," and she reached out for the enamelled case.

Mrs. Edgar, who had been lolling back among her cushions like a luxurious cat, was on her feet in the twinkling of an eye, tense and excited. Almost rudely, she snatched the case from her visitor's hand, exclaiming harshly, "Not there; there are none there."

Oriel was completely taken aback and mystified as she listened to the inadequate explanation: "I'm so awfully sorry. I've just smoked the last one, but I can send for some more directly."

"Oh, no," exclaimed Oriel, "it doesn't matter in the least; it was only a fancy. I really never smoke; besides I must go home."

As she turned down Connecticut Avenue Ida's noiseless electric, black, silent, and mysterious as some Venetian gondola, bound

on a strange errand, glided across into N Street, and drew up before her sister-in-law's door.

Cassie was no longer downstairs, nor did Ida ask for her, but merely entered the back room and took a certain box from the coffee table.

How was the green parlour-maid to know that Ida was the very last person whom her mistress would have been willing to let into that room alone? How could she suppose that a lady like Mrs. Michael Edgar would quietly carry off another person's property, no matter how temptingly pretty an enamelled case might be? The maid judged herself quite innocent of any wrong, but that did not prevent her mistress from making an “awful scene and cutting up rough,” in the damsel's own picturesque language, when she became aware that the box had quite disappeared.

Her anger ended suddenly, in a burst of hysterical sobbing which frightened Bridget more than any demonstration of wrath. Cassie threw herself down among the sofa cushions crying out, “Oh, find it for me! I

must have it! I cannot possibly go out to dinner if you don't find it." Nor did she.

Oriel came in just as Christian was hanging up the telephone receiver, which was placed by his bed. You have only just time to dress, darling," he said. "I'm sorry, I wanted you to stay with me so much! but they have just telephoned from the Embassy to say that they do need you to fill a place; someone else—a lady, I suppose—has given out."

When Oriel came into the drawing-room at the Embassy there was quite an excited buzz of talk; with her entrance a silence fell, and, with all her sensitiveness keyed to the snapping point, she felt—beneath the kind greeting of her host and hostess—pity. She glanced about the room to see whose place she was filling, assailed by a morbid suspicion.

First she counted the personnel. She noticed the First Secretary and the naval and military attachés with their wives—apparently the young Congressman's Mexican information had been inexact—and of course the host

and hostess—this made eight even couples; then there were a Supreme Justice with his wife, the Italian Ambassador and his daughter, a congressional ménage, a Pan-American official paired with the brilliant Miss Fitton, without whose witty sallies no function was esteemed a success. Then there were the Thayers and the Seymours — “old” and “new” Washingtonians—twenty-two, counting herself and Mr. Freshleigh—the number was complete.

As Oriel took his arm she said faintly: “I thought Mrs. Edgar was to be here?”

“Yes, she told me so yesterday,” answered Mr. Freshleigh, “but you can’t ever count on Cassie—she has too many things up her sleeve.” This with a sardonic grin.

“I wonder what excuse she gave? At the last minute too.”

“Grip, I guess; that covers a multitude of sins. Your husband isn’t here either, I see,” looking round the table. “Gripped too, I suppose.”

For many days Oriel had suffered in a com-

plex, dull way; it seemed to her that she was three separate persons—her tortured mind whirling over and over again in a narrowing circle; her will, which she forced to find in the maelstrom of thoughts enough mechanical words to satisfy her neighbours; and beneath all, quite separated from the rest, as it seemed, a concentrated self, aching, suffering, rebelling. Had that mass of physical pain about the heart become her only conscious ego? Tears rushed to her eyes—then once more she felt her will, working quite independently, and heard her voice answer smoothly:

“Yes, I like Washington very much—everyone is so hospitable I shall be quite sorry to leave so soon.”

And though her will said other things of equal importance during the remainder of the evening, she did not hear them on account of a curious beating which invaded her brain. Phantom drum taps were sounding throb- bly in her ears, and seemed to punctuate rhythmically the symphonic wailing of cello and violin.

**"An honest man he is, and hates the slime
That sticks on filthy deeds."**

CHAPTER XI
MICHAEL EDGAR

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MICHAEL EDGAR

LEFT alone, Christian tried to read, but the print danced before his eyes. Sleep also was impossible, and he found himself a prey to deadly boredom. He wondered whether his aching bones would find relief in warm water. Certainly a bath would pass the time. He rose with some effort, bathed, shaved, and found the apartment looking stuffy and unattractive in its sick-room disorder. He arranged the books and papers, straightened the bed, threw an embroidered dressing-gown over his shoulders, adjusted Oriel's silver on the mahogany *coiffeuse*, and felt quite pleased with himself, because he seemed a more presentable object than earlier in the day.

Jefferson entered with a cablegram. It

was from his uncle, asking him to return at once, as there was a splendid political opening in his department. It concluded: *Tendresse à tout deux*. Christian felt elated, and consequently hungry. He called back Jeff to ask if there was anything to eat in the house.

"Ain't nothing, Mr. Troyes. You folks been eatin' out so much I jis doan have things on hand. 'Twon't take me a second, though, to cook you some ham and eggs."

"Thank you, Jeff, nothing hot, but before you go home just run across to the Powhatan and get some sandwiches, and tell them to send over some iced champagne. That will set me up, better than ham, or even eggs. I think I could drink three quarts! Then you can go home, Jeff, but leave the street door on the latch. I see Madame forgot her night key, and I will hear any one if they should come in. You needn't come back before eight tomorrow, we shan't want breakfast early."

When his orders had been carried out Christian regarded his surroundings with an amused smile. For, recalling a former conversation,

he remembered that all the stereotyped accompaniments of "illicit love" were about him. The wicked foreigner with a bracelet watch—a supper—champagne—servants sent away—even Oriel, he reflected, would be conventional enough to believe the worst of such a *mise en scène*. He looked impatiently at his watch—it was hardly nine.

At ten-thirty the street door opened, and someone came upstairs and knocked. It was Michael Edgar, looking very much disturbed and portentous.

"No one answered your bell," he said, "and as the door was open I came in. I have to speak to you on a very unpleasant matter, and couldn't do so if your wife were here. Ida has gone to a 'hen dinner' with bridge after; she'll call for me here on her way home. If you are suffering much I have something for you. It's abominable stuff and I don't approve, but I'm very docile! Ida said that Mrs. Chris told her you wanted some, so I brought it."

"How funny," said Christian; "on the

contrary I've had everything I want and am beginning to feel fine. I seldom stay invalid long. Nothing would induce me to use that cursed box Ida must have given me as a pretext for taking it away with her."

"Well, here it is if you should want it," said Mike, as he placed on the table at Christian's elbow the elaborate enamel cigarette case which Oriel had seen that afternoon.

"And now I've a nasty business to tell you. I've just been to the club and they are all howling over the dancer affair. The whole town is buzzing; your name is associated with the D'Argentan's broken contract. Her manager is furious, has talked of your visit last night, and threatens a damage suit. Freshy's blabbed, too. Now I've always liked you, Troyes, but I don't like this kind of thing, and if only for your wife's sake I'm willing to hear what you've got to say."

"And do you mean that you have the temerity to come and tell me what your precious band of babbling old concierges have to say about my conduct!" Then after an explosion

of profanity he suddenly veered around, and holding out his hand said, with his charming smile which was always hard to resist:

"You are perfectly right, my dear fellow, and I thank you for taking an interest in my reputation. It hadn't somehow occurred to me that I would require a champion, but since it seems that I do, I am very glad to put my defence into your hands. I am accused—if I take your meaning—of being some unpleasant relation to this scum of the St. Lazare. I won't stop to inquire why your sages at the club have decided why, in that case, I should be so anxious to get her out of town to get rid of her, but perhaps you think that I have inadvertently married her——"

"I'm not even sure what I think," said Edgar. "I told you I reserved my opinion. I am quite ready to listen to anything you may have to say in the way of explanation."

Christian again contained his rage with difficulty; then spoke: "What I am going to tell you I don't even ask you to believe. My excellent friends who suspect any 'demd for-

eigner' of anything they please can't be expected to believe the word of gentlemen. However, it happens that I have proof of what I say." And diving his hand under the pillow he drew out a battered case, from which the cipher had been scraped with a penknife. Opening it he suddenly released a blaze of coloured light and held before the astonished eyes of Michael Edgar a magnificent mass of brilliants and emeralds—a necklace which an Empress might be proud of.

"You don't know what it is," said Christian. "Those are Cortez's emeralds, part of the spoils of Montezuma which were given to the King of Spain; went into a Carlist branch of the family, and were bought by my great-grandfather when he was Ambassador in Madrid. But that doesn't matter; it is wherein they concern me. Listen and you can find the confirmation of what I say at the Police Commissariat in Paris, and probably on record in New York, for the detectives were all on their track six years ago, though the case has been forgotten since.

"This necklace belonged to my grandmother. She was in the *tiers-ordre*, and given over to good works, especially *repêchage*, or what I suppose you would call here 'uplift,' in the women's prisons. Her work was practical, and I confess her family suffered sometimes. She was always thinking that she had found a Marguerite among the refuse of St. Lazare. Her particular *œuvre* was to find work and give shelter to the newly released prisoners. Poor Bonne-Maman, the number of crimes for which she was innocently responsible was legion. None of her Magdalens stayed in the *sentier de la vertu*, but it didn't matter. She never wavered, and always thought she would find a Phœnix—*l'âme blanche*. Her last discovery was Thérèse, and I confess she took us all in. I forget the exact brand of lies she told Bonne-Maman, who believed her entirely sinned against. She also believed in her longing for 'honest work,' and took the girl into her own house for two years. Thérèse worked in the lingerie much more quickly and decorously than any of the honest servants. She

had a great gift for *la coiffure*. I am talking too long. To shorten the story, she became my grandmother's maid.

"I had some doubt on Thérèse myself. She was too often with a *mauvais sujet*—the concierge's nephew Ton-Ton (you saw him last night). But I thought it was not my business if a *camériste* amused herself with a lover, and besides with no proof one did not like to speak against my grandmother's idol.

"I was at Versailles doing my service with the 'Dragons' that winter when it happened—but my grandmother always kept my room ready in Paris in case I missed the last train back, and old Principe, her butler, gave me the key to a little *porte de service* so that if I was very late or a little drunk—which never happens, I suppose, to virtuous American college boys—I could slip in quietly. If I had been having too good a time the concierge did not see me and the great bell of the *porte-cochère* did not wake the hotel. He was always nice to me, old Principe. Then if I had been a good little boy and there was a light *chez*

grandmère I went and kissed her good-night and talked.

“One night I had come unexpectedly to Paris—without permission. It was very late and so when I had sneaked into the Hôtel Troyes I was surprised to see a light in her room. Then I remembered that she had been to a great dinner at the Spanish Embassy for Alphonso, so I thought I would go in. The door was locked, so I passed round to enter through her dressing-room. It was locked too and I heard a noise I didn’t like, then the maid’s voice—very queer. So I pushed the door and went in. You never saw such a place—everything was torn to pieces and broken. Ton-Ton, the concierge’s nephew, was trying to wrench open the wall safe, but he went through the window when he heard the door go. I didn’t see Thérèse, and thought, of course, they must have killed her. Another man was standing over my grandmother—he was a soldier with the regiment number torn off his collar, and was trying to make her tell where the key was, but she was a very plucky

old lady, even with pins through her hands, and wouldn't say a word. So I just jumped on the man and punched him very good and it felt all soft and nasty and I looked. It was Thérèse in one of my uniforms.

"She scratched and bit quite a lot—there's one of her marks—but I had got her, and you may be sure I held on till she was pretty well strangled. Sorry I didn't finish, but when Bonne-Maman could speak she made me leave go; nothing, she said, would make her send a fellow-creature to prison (she had those ideas, and besides, she knew the prisons). Thérèse had had her fright, she said, and must be left to conscience (she had those ideas, too). So I must lock her in the bathroom till we could place her in some refuge, and there was so much to do after that, for my grandmother was never quite the same again, that with doctors and nurses I forgot Thérèse till quite late, and when we opened the door there was no Thérèse in the bathroom, only a string of towels hanging from the window. Of course, she had no trouble joining Ton-Ton

and escaping through the concierge's lodge. That's all, except the necklace. When we opened the safe all the jewels were in it but that. It seems that the maid had managed to snap it out before the safe was locked. Of course, we set the police after them, but nothing ever happened. We thought the emeralds had been cut up long ago and never heard of either of the thieves again—until last night. There they both were! That *collage* had lasted through greed and fear of each other, I suppose. It takes the brutal stupidity of such creatures to think she was safe in wearing the gems here, but they have advertised her glass gewgaws so much that she needed some real jewels to make the audience swallow the rest of the Christmas tree and her story of European 'crowned heads.' I fancy that's why they risked it, and, after all, if I hadn't been there it wouldn't have mattered. The affair is too old now for the police to notice, so that would have been safe enough."

He paused, then said, ironically, "If I had realized the fragility of my reputation I

suppose I might have gone to law and waited a few years more, but I generally mind my business myself, so I gave Thérèse six hours to leave and she gave me the necklace. Of course, it belongs to Oncle Antoine. What a pity it's too late to catch 'La Duchesse, *née* Jones.' She's sailing tomorrow with Mrs. Wilmcote. I could have sent it over by them. Now, you might go back to the club and tell them I've made a full confession of my shameful relations with Blanche d'Argentan and throw myself on their mercy. Or shall I put on one of Oriel's nightgowns and take a penitential candle with some ashes and go myself?"

Poor Mike was much overcome. "You needn't be rough and sarcastic and nasty," he said. "I am sure I apologize quite humbly (so would the others I'm sure), and I'd like to do anything I can to make up. It's true, partly, what you said just now. It doesn't take much for us to be down on foreigners, but it wouldn't have happened without Freshleigh and very strong circumstantial evidence, but I

am going over to the club right away to nip this thing in the bud before it gets round any more and the *Looking Glass* and *Fables* get hold of it. If your lights are still going I will stop in again on my way home. Ida was to call for me here, anyway."

"Yes, do, and thank you, Mike, for telling me. I was angry at first, but am not any longer. In fact, you have done me a real friend's service."

"I'm awfully glad I spoke after all," said Mike meditatively. "I'd been worrying about the thing, though Ida told me not to meddle with it—'less said soonest mended,' she says—but this time, for once, she was wrong."

He was leaving the room when Christian called him back.

"Forgive me for speaking," he said; "it is horribly painful to both of us, but I feel that I must; don't mind, you can consider me a specialist; I have made my studies and have followed the courses at the Salpêtrière and elsewhere, and have had more practical experience than many a doctor. If you can man-

age to take care of Cassie now you may save her; I don't consider it a hopeless case. Not like others I've seen. She still tells the truth. She has kept that box without using it, and is afraid to begin until she has more. She hasn't been able to get it, so sent for me to work on my feelings and try to have me use some of my old associates' diplomas and the valise to get her a supply. Of course, I refused, but she will get it for all that; they always do. If you can really take care of her, watch her, prevent her until this particular crisis passes. If you could get her husband to come back I do believe that she may still be saved—and you know that I am not an optimist on that subject."

Mike silently pressed his hand. "Thank you, thank you; so she came to you, did she? Who would have believed it? We will watch and watch; perhaps now that Ida has so fortunately got that box from her we may be able to do something."

"Oh, I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell,
But that I did proceed upon just grounds
To this extremity."

CHAPTER XII

"A CASTLE IN CYPRUS"

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ALTHOUGH the flaring gas jets were turned full on, quite exhausted by so much talking Christian dropped off into a troubled sleep. He waked with a start, to find his wife standing in the room. She was gazing fixedly upon the enamel cigarette case beside his bed; her face was deadly pale, with deep circles about her eyes. He saw that her hands were clenched and every muscle tense with nervous excitement.

She looked so strange, so old, so despairing, that for a moment Troyes simply gazed speechlessly into her face, then said: "For heaven's sake, *trésor de mon cœur*, don't give me such a fright."

"No," she answered, "you need not fear. I have been a gull, a dolt, but it is over now."

Christian sighed wearily and closed his eyes, saying: "Oh, dear, if you knew how tired I am and how sore my throat is, you would kiss me and come to bed, instead of 'melo-ing' again like that. Please, Orrie, don't be a fool!"

"No," she answered, and her voice was so strange that all in a moment Christian realized that she was really moved by tragic emotion. "I shall never be a fool again."

In one bound, for he was very agile in movement, her husband had leapt from bed to where she was standing near the safe, and had dashed the revolver which was pressed against her temple from her hand. As the butt struck a chair it exploded, and the bullet, taking a slightly upward direction, followed its new course.

Christian staggered back and fell on the bed. His wife, supporting herself against the wall, gazed at him stupefied. The front door burst open, quick steps mounted the stair, and Michael Edgar dashed into the room. "What in God's name is the matter? Oh, Christian!"

He answered quite faintly, but distinctly: “Nothing, a little accident; I was uncharging that foolish pistol. It’s not much.”

Oriel’s teeth were clenched, her voice hysterical, as she cried: “For God’s sake, no more lies—it was I that had the pistol; I have been a fool long enough.”

In the pause which followed her cry Michael gazed helplessly for a moment from one to the other, then suddenly stepped to Christian’s side and eased him back among the pillows. “My dear boy,” he said, his voice shaking with emotion, “surely you’re not much hurt!”

“Quite done for,” answered Christian calmly, “but while I can talk come close, closer, for I can’t speak twice. Keep your head; you alone can save us from an awful scandal. To say an accident won’t do; listen carefully and remember. This is what you must tell them: that when Dr. Le Blanc was here, the other day, I consulted him and learned that I could not live six months. As I can’t bear pain, I finished it at once! You understand. Go

straight to the White House and find the aide on duty and explain; they are kind. Perhaps they will stop the newspapers, or make them say what I tell you. Jeff must find my body tomorrow. You can write a line from me telling him to call you. Write so:

“ ‘Jeff:

“ ‘Notify Mr. Edgar at once, also Main 6, also Columbia 828; do nothing further till Mr. Edgar comes.’ Sign ‘Troyes.’ ”

He fell back a moment exhausted, then said feebly, “Better give me a little of that stuff. *Je souffre affreusement*; I can’t quite stand it.”

Edgar obeyed Christian like one hypnotized; he took the enamelled cigarette case from the table, and drawing from the box a tiny implement with a set of glass tubes, he approached Christian and thrust the instrument into his arm.

Troyes gasped, and then spoke again, more feebly:

“Now tell her everything, all that you know, spare no one.”

"My God, Christian, not now; let me telephone for a doctor."

"Stop! Never! No doctor! no police! till it's over. It won't be long, but I can't die till I know that she knows everything, till I have heard you tell her. Kneel near me, Orrie, and listen. First tell her where that damned stuff came from."

"I brought it myself," said Edgar, "this evening. Ida told me to; she said that you needed it badly and that you wouldn't call a doctor to prescribe. She got it from Sis, took it off her table. Oh, it isn't her fault, Madame; you don't know, of course, but my poor sister, poor Cassie, has been a victim of that drug for years. She went to be cured at a place near Montreux, where your husband's mother died of the same thing; of course they met. She can't bear to have it known, and was terribly frightened that Chris would speak, might say that she had been in an institution of that sort. She made him promise. My God, I can't go on!"

Oriel's face was ghastly white, but her eyes

had the look of the blind who sees suddenly. She asked quite quietly:

"Did Ida know all this?"

"Of course, I had to tell her."

Oriel dropped on her knees, holding her husband's hand in both of hers. He seemed to have fainted, and was breathing badly; a thin trickle of blood was on his lips. Edgar poured some raw whisky from a pocket flask, and held it against his teeth. Christian opened his eyes, which looked no longer of this world, and muttered something which sounded like "*tu viendra.*" Oriel nodded quickly and rose from her knees. She seemed to have grown taller, and spoke with a commanding calm which required obedience.

"You must go now, my friend; there is nothing to be done except—what he told you. May God help you. Now leave Christian to me!"

Edgar staggered from the room, and down the stairs. The front door was wide open—an icy blast swept through the tiny corridor and up the staircase. He leaned in the door-

way incapable of motion. The minutes crept by. He seemed to be in a strange nightmare, and in the surging of his mind one subtle black thought like a wicked snake slipped between him and his striving to grasp Christian's orders.

In a maze he watched the lamps of a taxicab approaching, the only blot on the deserted street. It drew up—stopped. The thought which had evaded him suddenly grew strong and seemed to possess his whole soul.

Ida called to him. “Don't keep me waiting in the cold; I know I'm late, but the game wouldn't finish. Come along home.”

With no conscious effort of will, still in a maze, he heard his own voice speaking to her. It said: “Fiend! devil! God knows what you are. Not my wife, not my wife! God, it would be too horrible!”

A harsh voice, which was still Ida's, retorted: “Any one would know what is wrong with you. You are soddenly, sottishly drunk!” And, leaning from the window, she cried sharply, “To my house quickly, and then the Union Station.”

Oriel was on her knees beside the bed trying to bring her husband back for a moment more. "Christian, can you hear me?" A faint moan. "I have never, in the blackest depths of the hell where I have been living, stopped loving you. You mustn't leave me now."

His voice, very hoarse and strange, answered: "For ever and afterwards, together—*sæcula*—" and trailed off.

Oriel stepped to the table; her head was suddenly, strangely clear, and on a sheet of paper she wrote in a firm hand:

"Jeff, for my father's sake, obey me now! Call North 1611, for Mr. Edgar; he will be waiting. Until he comes do nothing, then do absolutely all he tells you. Good-by, my old friend."

Then she gave Christian some more whisky and spoke in his ear desperately:

"Oh, my darling, you must help me. I don't know how to do it."

With the last of his voice and a rush of blood Christian whispered: "The glass tube in the needle—another and another—the mix-

ture is strong—three are sure—press hard; if you can, pierce a vein, it will be quicker—”

Feverishly Oriel followed his directions, stooping first to kiss him—he had lost consciousness—and since there was so much blood on the pillows his wife lay down on the floor beside him. Neither were breathing some hours later, when the pale light of a February morning slowly filled the room and Christian’s negro servant, old Jefferson, entered the house.

"When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe——"

CHAPTER XIII

"SCANDAL AT THE COSMOPOLITAN"

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MRS. WILMCOTE never had so much trouble in getting off for Europe as on this particular morning. She awoke rather late in her sumptuous room at the Ritz-Carlton, and at once perceived that it was one of those peculiar days when the simplest dressing bag refuses to get packed, the plainest coiffure eludes the pin. Then, she had been disturbed twice by long-distance telephone calls, which she could make nothing of. Twice a faint voice had said: "Washington wants to speak to you. Please hold the line," but though she waited long at the instrument, nothing further could be made of the message. Fearing to be late, she crossed hurriedly to the Duchess's apartment. "Go right on, down to the

steamer, please, Amélie," she said, "and get the baggage registered. I will come at the last moment, don't be worried. I shall not miss the ship, but I must really make one more effort to get that message through. Perhaps I can hear better downstairs, at the central telephone; these bedroom connections are no good." So she wrestled once more with the wire, but to no avail. Once, indeed, she thought she heard a very faint, far-away voice, calling her name, then rattle, confusion, silence. The sound of this voice reassured her, for she was gifted with a remarkable oral memory, and felt at once quite certain that it was the voice of Michael Edgar. As the Edgars were not counted among her intimate friends, she was instantly convinced that the message could be of no prime importance. In fact, it could hardly be anything more than a belated invitation of some sort, and as they would eventually hear of her departure, would answer itself.

Dropping the telephone, she hastened to the Transatlantic Company's pier. When she drove on to the dock the newsboys were shout-

ing an "extra." She had had no time to read the morning paper, and as the political situation was extremely tense, she bought one. The Duchess's maid was waiting at the gangplank. To her Mrs. Wilmcote hastily turned over a small handbag and sat down on a deck chair for the purpose of casting a hasty glance over the sheet. It was not, however, the horrible news of the crisis in Mexico which caused her abrupt pallour; although the bloody account of the treacherous attack and double butchery of President and Vice-President at the National Palace might well have caused emotion. But that which at once chained her attention was the fifth column of the first page, where, printed under immense "scare" headlines in scarlet ink, she read:

**TERRIBLE TRAGEDY
IN DIPLOMATIC CORPS!
DOUBLE SUICIDE!**

"Not since the regrettable death of the Minister from France, in 1870, has the diplomatic circle at Washington suffered such a shock as

it felt this morning, when the tragic news became known here of the most distressing suicide of a young attaché and his still more youthful bride.

“We are authorized to state, on the fullest authority, that in spite of some sensational rumours, the cause of this lamentable catastrophe is most simple. M. de Troyes has long been suffering from an acute malady of which his friends knew nothing. He was himself unaware of the extreme gravity of his illness until the visit, some two weeks since, of one of France’s most famous physicians, whom he then consulted. It has been observed by many of the young couple’s friends that since this visit both were decidedly depressed in spirits. It was evidently owing to their knowledge of Mr. De Troyes’s precarious tenure of life, that the young couple, who were as devoted to one another as they were both popular among the youthful set at the capital, took this fatal decision. Mr. De Troyes, who had been confined for the last few days to his room, shot himself at a late hour last night. His wife,

who had evidently found him unconscious after returning from a dinner to which he was unable to accompany her, is supposed to have at once taken a fatal overdose of morphine. Her death evidently occurred some hours later. Both bodies were discovered by Jefferson Roland, Mr. de Troyes's negro valet, who, surprised at having had, up to 8 o'clock, no news from his master, entered the room and was confronted with this tragic spectacle. Mme. de Troyes was lying on the floor, and it is the opinion of the physician immediately summoned by Mr. Edgar, this latter being the first person to arrive on the scene, that life was only just extinct. The extreme youth and brilliant prospects of the young couple make this double tragedy all the more poignant. Mr. de Troyes, who was only in his twenty-seventh year, was understood to be heir to the present Duke of the same name, and his marriage last summer, to one of Virginia's fairest daughters, was the chief topic of conversation last season at Blanche-ster. His wife, *née* Miss Oriel Arden, daughter of Chesterfield Arden, Esq., of Arden

Manor, Albemarle County, Va., was but in her twenty-third year. She leaves no near relatives. It is believed that the mortal remains of the unfortunate couple will be conveyed to France after a simple religious service (necessarily of the simplest), at which there will be present only a few members from the same embassy, and a limited number of personal friends. Thus far it has been entirely impossible to establish communication with the only near relation of Mr. de Troyes, widow of the late Duke, *née* Emily Jones, of California. This distinguished lady has been passing part of the winter in Washington and New York and sailed this morning on the *Provence*. She was accompanied by Mrs. Warren Wilmcote, also an intimate friend of young Mme. de Troyes, and to whom the wireless message bearing the above news will come inevitably as a terrible shock."

A moment later Mrs. Wilmcote was knocking frantically at the door of the *suite de luxe* occupied by the Duchess, the journal in her hand.

Mme. de Troyes was just emerging from an inner cabin, her bosom decorated with the orchids and the maidenhair which, in a certain class of society, form the indispensable adjunct to an ocean voyage.

For a moment Mrs. Wilmcote stood supporting herself upon the centre table; her throat was dry, she was for an instant quite incapable of speech, and even felt abominably like fainting. As from an immense distance she heard the gentle prattle of the loquacious Duchess saying:

“Isn’t it nice, Sue, poor little Ida took the ‘midnight’ from Washington and has joined me; she is only just in time to sail, and sadly upset. Her husband was horribly drunk last night and abused her frightfully. Of course, she will divorce him. Why, just think! he actually turned her out of doors before the taxi driver, too. Imagine!”

Mrs. Wilmcote suddenly mastered her emotion and spoke quite calmly. “Emily, my dear, I have terrible news for you—and no time to break it. I must go back to Washing-

ton; here is the paper. In a moment the steamer will sail. Ida Clay with tell you the rest. And may God have mercy on her soul! Comfort Antoine and tell him to believe nothing—nothing, until I come.” As she ran down the narrow corridor she overturned Ida Clay en route to the Duchess’s sumptuous cabin, but she neither looked back nor slackened her rapid pace. Even as it was, she reached the deck just as the last gangplank was being drawn from the liner. She regained the wharf as a crowd of fussy little steamboats, churning up the black and muddy depths of the harbour’s underworld, noisily marshalled the great ship on her way to the eternal deep.

In the darkened parlour of Christian’s little house Mrs. Wilmcote was talking to Jefferson. The poor old darky looked like some pathetic gargoyle, his face was so twisted and lined with grief. “Of co’sse I’ll jes’ do what you folks tell me,” he said. “I hain’t got no call to disobey my master, and he tole me to, but dere ain’t no use in tryin’ to fool ole Jeff, Mis’ Wilmcote.

Massa Chris, he wa'n't no mo' sick n'you or I is, not ha'f as much sick, kase he was young and happy."

Mrs. Wilmcote saw the futility of explanation with this old man and tried to change the subject. "All right, Jeff; say what we tell you, and think what you please; I can't help that. What have you got to live on now?"

"Noth'n now, Mis'," said the old man, simply. "But, Laws, don't you worry 'bout me; that doan' matter. I jes' seem kinder to hav' lost ma taste for life down here. When Miss Oriel pick me up one day I was jes' 'bout to de end of my rope; couldn't git no place, kase everyone said I was too ole to work. Dey'se 'bout right, I reckon now. I jes' kind of lost my taste for work, too."

Mrs. Wilmcote spoke with great severity: "We are all like that, we old ones, and you've got no business to make me cry! I haven't let myself cry yet for your master, Jeff. You abominable darky! do you think you can make me do it to please you?"

Jefferson made a sudden resolve. "You'se

a kind of an understanding lady, and I'd like to speak to you 'bout sumfin' lyin' very heavy on ole Jeff's mind. I can't never forgive myself for what's happened, Mis', kase you see it was all my fault."

Mrs. Wilmcote started. "What utter nonsense," she exclaimed. "Why, what can you mean?"

"Jes' this," he answered. "I didn't take the care I ought to had of my young folks. If I had been watchin' over dem all de time t'wouldn't hev happen'." He unclenched his right hand and slowly spread its pale palm before her astonished eyes. In it lay a queer, misshapen, smoke-grimed image. "Dere's what done it all," he said with complete conviction.

Mrs. Wilmcote knew too much to combat the deep-seated beliefs of his race, so she only said: "If it's the devil that did it, Jeff, surely you need not worry. You and I can't fight him, you know!"

"P'raps not," he said, doubtfully, "though it's my belief that love can fight devils"; and

he added, in an awe-struck tone: "But the devil as put dat one in the hearth was a human devil, Mis' Wilmcote, and you and I can fight dat kind!"

A light broke in upon Mrs. Wilmcote as she answered: "Yes, you are right; it is rather late to begin, but we can do that. Perhaps, even, we were put in this world just in order to do that, Jeff, and we will. I believe, after all, that there is a sort of rough justice on this checker-board, and that it may be found by those that dare look for it. You may trust me, Jefferson. Such as it is, I shall have it!"

"I always said that Frenchman was rotten," remarked Mr. Freshleigh at the Cosmopolitan a few days later, but before the incidents above related were quite forgotten in the haste and rush of the next sensation.

Michael Edgar was about to leave the smoking room. His face was pinched and haggard, the cheerful bulldog countenance had aged, but his eye at once lighted with a gleam, such as can only be found in the best sporting species.

"Did you?" he said very slowly; "well, I should advise you not to say it again in my presence," and with the most complete deliberation he took Mr. Freshleigh's nose between his thumb and forefingers and wrung it. In a second all was confusion. Half a dozen strong arms had intervened to force the combatants apart before more serious damage had been done. But there was a moment's hesitation as Edgar broke from their hold. He looked dangerous. As the phrase goes he had "blood in his eye." No one cared, particularly, to meddle with him in this mood. Then, all at once, the Southern Senator stepped quietly forward and laid a restraining hand on Edgar's shoulder. His voice rang out above the hurly-burly, as of old it had sounded on the battle-field.

"Stop, Mr. Edgar!" he commanded. "It's no use, though I understand and quite sympathize with your feelings. There is nothing to be done. You will only soil your hands. His kind will brag, and they will lie, and they will stab in the back, but, by the Lord Henry, you can't make a coward fight!"

Mr. Freshleigh's face was a light mauve colour. He muttered, "By the Lord, I will have the law on you!"

"No, you will not," retorted the Senator, fiercely. "You will not dare, for you know that you would then have me also to deal with. Gentlemen, I beg you all to consider this incident closed and refrain from speaking of it outside. This is a private club. Let us not permit any scandal to penetrate beyond our walls. We shall have no further trouble with Mr. Freshleigh, I am confident."

The Senator was right. Mr. Freshleigh had always been a man of peace, quite incapable of bearing overt malice, and guiltless of any violent act. So it happened that an incident which might have stirred society to its very depths closed with most discreet silence and in the profound respect of those laws which are known to the world as "club etiquette."

Press Comment
on
The Sonnets of Shakespeare
by
The Countess de Chambrun

AMERICAN PRESS

San Francisco Chronicle

George Hamlin Fitch

"The author marshals her evidence in a scholarly way and reaches her conclusions in so logical a manner that one is forced to accept them. She has also the gift of sarcasm which enables her to dispose of many theories in brief but effective style. In a word, she has made this subject of Shakespeare's sonnets, which is usually devoid of interest except to scholars, as readable as a romance, while incidentally she has turned a flood of light upon several dark places in Shakespeare's life and has opened avenues of investigation which should be followed up by English scholars."

Review of Reviews

March 1, 1914

"A fascinating discussion of the 'Sonnets of Shakespeare.' The author endorses the personal theory of the sonnets and divides them into three series."

Bookseller, Newsdealer, and Stationer Feb. 15, 1914

"A book which will make a strong appeal to all readers who are interested in the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy as well as to all those who appreciate scholarly criticism and original research. Countess de Chambrun has a keen sense of humour and possesses a wit that would do credit to the period of which she writes."

Philadelphia Enquirer

"She certainly makes a very plausible argument. At least her arrangement and her deductions are orderly and do not put a heavy strain on the imagination or do violence to common sense interpretation. She has taken a well-worn subject and given it new interest."

New York **G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS**

London

Press Comment

Boston Transcript

Feb. 28, 1914

" . . . and who is this contemporary, who clinches the Countess de Chambrun's evidence? She finds him in Nicholas Rowe.

"If this is an example of what seems to Countess de Chambrun 'contemporary evidence,' what then can all the other evidence in her volume be worth? Nicholas Rowe was born in 1674, his edition being, as the Countess says, published in 1709—what more is there to say? "

[Just this—oh wise and careful critic! That the author was not speaking of Nicholas Rowe but of that informant without whose personal and reiterated testimony he would not (he says) have set down the evidence in question. Namely Sir William d'Avenant, author of the only known contemporary poem on Shakespeare's death, written in 1616—by the brother of that child of whom it is recorded "Master Shakespeare hath given him a hundred kisses—" and entitled, "Ode on the remembrance of Master William Shakespeare." C. L. C.]

FRENCH REVIEWS

La Revue

"An interesting study free from pedantry, in which we see beyond the poems the man, and beyond the man a whole epoch."

Journal des Débats

Joseph Aynard

"The genius of Shakespeare is in the sonnets. This is perhaps the only point which is not obscure or has not been doubted. One wonders how it can be reconciled with the hypothetical authorship of Bacon.

"For the sonnets are the creation of circumstances so exceptional that no others, it seems, could have produced them, and it is equally certain that their author is the same as the writer of the comedies and dramas. The work would be completely incomprehensible if it flowed from the pen either of a nobleman or one of the 'great ones of the earth.' Countess de Chambrun's book brings new confirmation of the Shakespearian tradition. We can give but a superficial idea of its interest, for it includes

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Press Comment

most valuable documentation and light on many questions—the aid received by Shakespeare from Southampton and Florio, in his plays on Italian subjects—and a most piquant rejoinder to the ‘aristocratic’ hypothesis in finding, in the wife of John d’Avenant, the poet’s ‘evil genius.’

“The book is also a clever reply to the pedantic view which would have it that the greatest of poets could not have been Shakespeare because he was not ‘erudite’ and to the snobbishness which would have us believe that only the noble could possess noble sentiments. Without historical and contemporary documents on the life of Robert Burns how incredible it would seem to us that this peasant should have become one of the first poets and a prominent ‘bel-esprit’ of the eighteenth century! And yet it must have been a life not differing greatly from that which the actor Shakespeare led in the seventeenth.

“The tone of absolute sincerity which is struck in this book is illustrated by the citing of the old evidence, hitherto only mentioned we believe by one Shakespearean critic, and which Mme. de Chambrun has again recorded, concerning the religion in which Shakespeare in his earliest written manuscript biography is said to have died.”

PRESS OF GREAT BRITAIN

Irish Times

April 3, 1914

“The mass of literature that has accumulated round Shakespeare’s dramas is proportionally equalled by studies of his sonnets, but one is tempted to think that this new study by the Countess de Chambrun will be found amongst the most readable. It is not to be imagined that because of its lightness of touch it is, therefore, superficial. It is clear that the authoress is thoroughly conversant with her subject, and with all the theories woven round it, nor does she fail to throw out many suggestive hints, not far-fetched, but such as her nimble American intellect creates. She is one of those who believe that ‘Mr. W. H.,’ ‘the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets,’ was the thief who stole the copy for the pirate-publisher Thorpe; for, as Sir Sidney Lee has proved, Thorpe’s usual mode of addressing lords was not after the fashion of the preface to the sonnets, so that Pembroke or Southampton is out of

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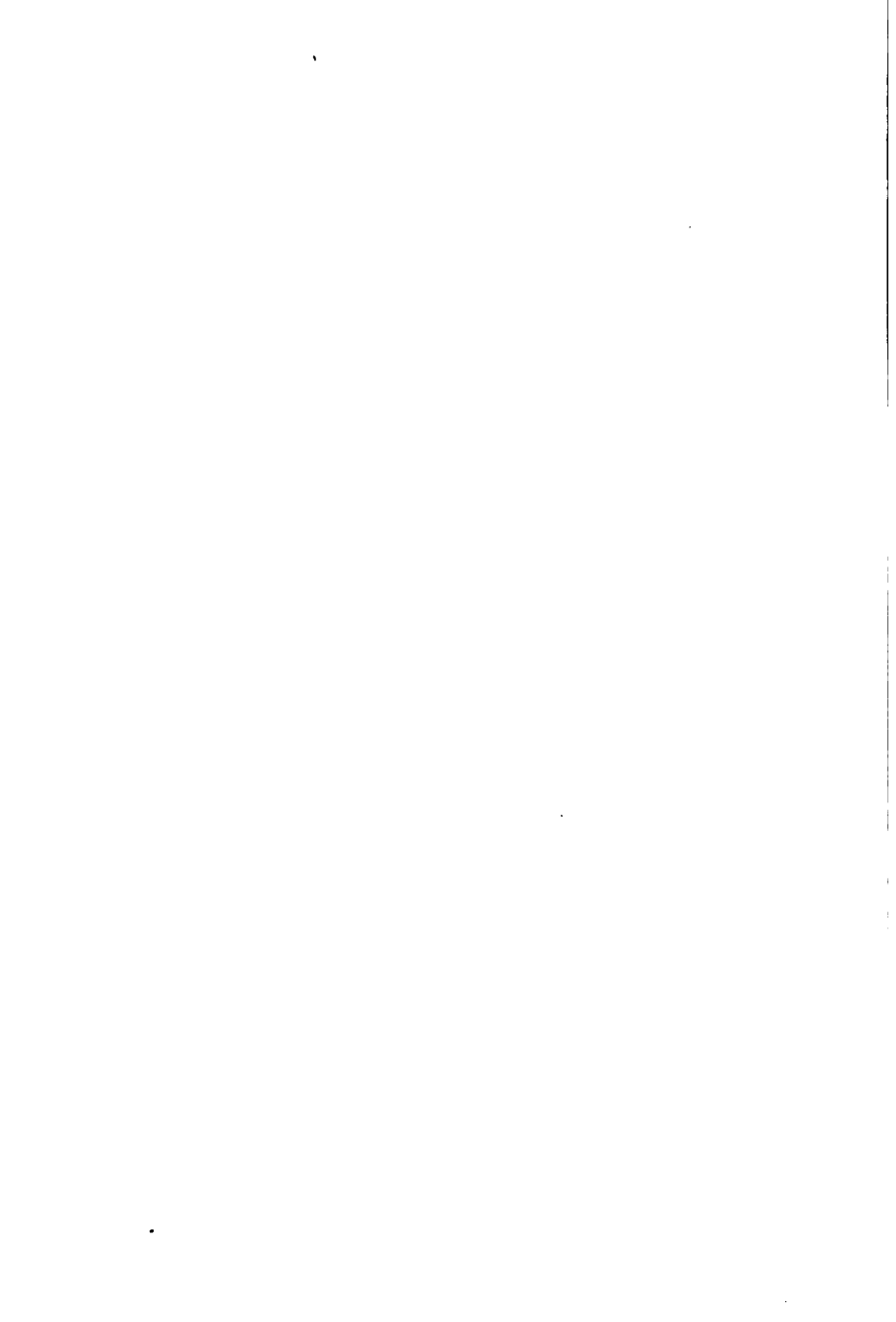
Press Comment

the question. It is not, therefore, on this preface that she relies for the proof that the youth of the sonnets was the Earl of Southampton, but on the dedications of 'Venus and Adonis' and the 'Rape of Lucrece,' on allusions which she finds in the sonnets to the coterie of poets who surrounded Southampton and to the Earl's imprisonment in connection with the conspiracy of Essex, and, lastly, on the statement in Rowe's biography of the close friendship that existed between Southampton and the poet.

"It is, however, 'The Dark Lady' who interests chiefly in the sonnets, and the mind of the student, ever in search of some new thing, and not averse from a little scandal accompanying it when found, will find in this book something to whet his curiosity. It is not the familiar theory of Pembroke's Mary Fitton or Sidney's Stella that he will find, but a tale of an Oxford wine-merchant's wife, no less a person than a Mrs. d'Avenant, the mother of the poet Sir William d'Avenant. To bear out the theory, have we not the testimony of Anthony à Wood, the Oxford compiler, of Oldys and of Aubrey, as to Shakespeare's friendship with the family and the scandal that Sir William d'Avenant complacently countenanced? As the Countess de Chambrun points out, her theory is supported independently by Mr. Acheson, who has unearthed a censored poem of 1594, 'Willobie his Avisas,' in which the characters include a beautiful innkeeper's wife, a dissolute nobleman (H. W.), and his friend (W. S.). This is almost evidence that a court of law might accept!

"The Countess de Chambrun has wisely not erred on the side of length in her study of the sonnets. She has left ample room to enhance the value of her book by the inclusion of the sonnets themselves, slightly re-arranged, with reasoned explanations, while retaining Thorpe's division into three series. The reprint of 'Rowe's Life of Shakespeare,' a work very difficult to obtain, and one of the best written and most sympathetic appreciations that could be found in any literature, would in itself ensure a welcome to the volume, while several other appendices give quotations from contemporary publications about Southampton, and from Anthony à Wood and Aubrey about persons whose names are linked with Shakespeare's."





**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]



